

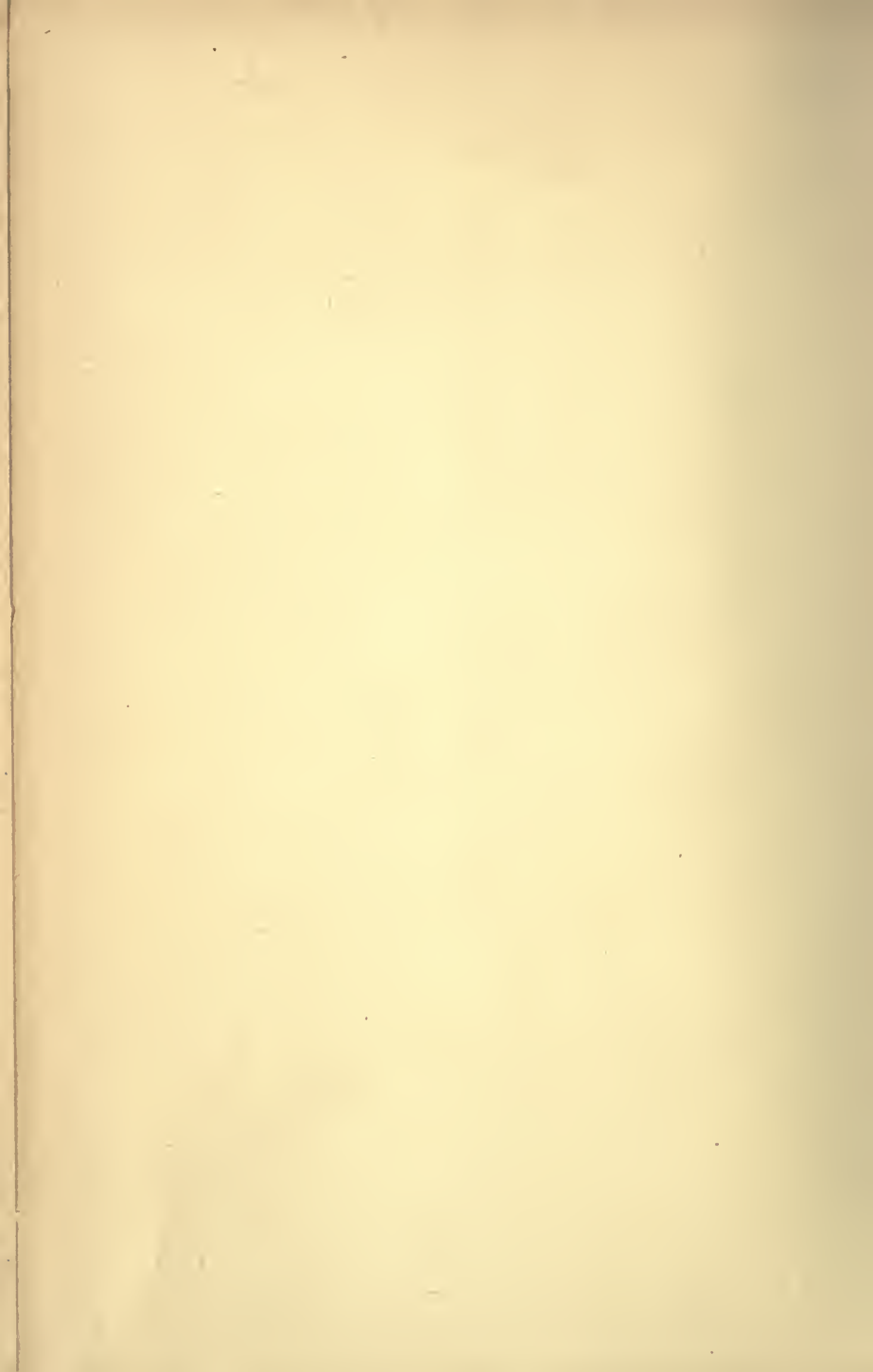
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SONGS
OF
THE DEAD END

PATRICK MACGILL was born at Glenties, a little village in one of the wildest districts of Donegal on the north coast of Ireland, twenty-one years ago. The eldest of a family of ten, he had to go out into the world at a very early age and begin his fight in the great battle of life. When twelve years old he was engaged as a farm hand in the Irish Midlands, where his day's work began at five o'clock in the morning and went on till eleven at night through Summer and Winter. It was a man's work with a boy's pay. At fourteen, seeking newer fields, he crossed from 'Derry to Scotland; and there for seven years was either a farm hand, drainer, tramp, hammer-man, navvy, plate-layer or wrestler. During all these years he devoted part of his spare time to reading, and found relief from the drag of the twelve-hour shift in the companionship of books. At nineteen he published "Gleanings from a Navvy's Scrap-book," of which 8000 copies were sold. Encouraged by the success which marked this venture, he immediately gathered material for a new volume, and while engaged in so doing, received an appointment on the editorial staff of the "Daily Express," and in September, 1911, left the service of the Caledonian Railway Company at Greenock and came to London. In the following year he relinquished his post with the newspaper, and published "Songs of a Navvy." This, as well as the former, being now out of print, he has put together some of the pieces out of either, re-written others, and added fresh ones to the same in the present "*Songs of the Dead End.*"

J. N. D.

WINDSOR, July, 1912

THE NAVVY

REMOTE from mansion and from mart,
Beyond our outer, furrowed fields —
One with the rock he cleaves apart,
One with the weary pick he wields —
Bowed with his weight of discontent,
Beneath the heavens sagging gray,
His steaming shoulders stark and bent,
He drags his joyless years away.

For dreamy dames with haughty eyes,
And cunning men with soft white hands
Have offered you in sacrifice
Lone outcast of the outcast lands.
For all the furs that keep them warm,
For all the food that keeps them fit,
Through all the years they've wrought you harm,
And take a churlish pride in it.

Brutish we've hashed it far and near,
I've shared your woe and dull despair;
We've sung our songs, and none to hear,
And told our wrongs, and none to care.
Some day — how soon we may not tell —
We'll rend the riven fetters free.
Till then, may heaven guard you well,
And God be good to you — and me.



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SONGS
OF
THE DEAD END

BY
PATRICK MacGILL



NEW YORK
MITCHELL KENNERLEY
MCMXIV

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*I do not sing
Of angel fair or damozel
That leans athwart a painted sky;
My little verses only tell
How human beings live and die,
And labour as their years go by.*

*I do not sing
Of plaster saints or jealous gods,
But of the little ones I know,
Who paint their cheeks or bear their hods
Because they live in doing so
Their hapless life on earth below.*

*I sing of them
Whose lives are varied as their creeds —
I've shared their every toil and care,
I know their many hopes and needs,
I've seen Death take them unaware;
Mayhap some day their death I'll share.*

*I sing their life,
Misknown, miscalled, misunderstood,
Its ups and downs, its outs and ins;
I know the evil and the good,
Where virtue ends and vice begins —
But judge no mortal by his sins.*

*I sing of them,
The underworld, the great oppressed,
Befooled of parson, priest, and king,
Who mutely plod earth's pregnant breast,
Who weary of their sorrowing,
— The Great Unwashed — of them I sing.*

*I sing my songs,
In mirthful guise or woeful strain;
I've dwelt where woe and hunger dwell,
And told my rosaries of pain —
I sing my songs to you — and well,
You'll maybe like them — who can tell?*

THESE VERSES ARE DEDICATED

TO

My Pick and Shovel

Because we have swined in the drift,
Because we have horsed it alone,
Strong, unafraid, or in shine or in shade,
Companionless and unknown ;

Because we have laboured our bit
For all our impetuous worth,
Roughing it hard, discarded and scarred,
In the uttermost corners of earth ;

Through the drag of the long, stagnant day,
Where the infinite wilderness is,
As we slunk from the breath of an imminent death
In this tortuous world of His ;

Since we have been pals of the wild,
Tried in the furnace and true,
Don't take it amiss if I dedicate this
Volume of verses to you.

PATRICK MACGILL.

ON THE OPEN ROAD,
October, 1911

Songs of the Dead End

THE PICK

IN the depths of the pluvial season it gallantly stayed
to your hand,
In the dead end of woe and creation, afar in the fur-
thermost land,
When the saturnine heavens hung o'er you as dark as
the ultimate tomb,
When the trough of the valley you gutted was filled
with ineffable gloom,
When down in the depths of the planet uprooting the
brontosaur's bed,
With the fire damp writhing around you, and a candle
affixed to your head,
When the gold-seeking fever enthralled you, when you
fitfully watered the pan,
Ever it strove to your bidding, ever it aided your plan,
Ready, resistless, reticent, friend of the conquering man!

See that its edge is like silver, tempered to try and be
tried,
Look on your pick as a lover would gaze on the girl
at his side,
If it responds to your promptings, when the navvy men
hurry and sweat,
If it be proof to the tempest, when the clouds and the
dirt-bed have met,
If its handle be graceful and lissome, slipping and soft
in the hand,

Brothers, 't is meet for its mission, tend it, for ye understand;
Try it with fire and with water, try it in sand and in rock,
See that the slag can't resist it, see that it beareth the shock,
Hurling the rock from its fastness, goring the destitute earth,
Tearing the guts of the tunnel, seeking the coal for the hearth
Down in the stygian darkness, ye who can reckon its worth!

Work it for days one and twenty, then if it's true to the test,
Look on your pick as a maiden, but often the pick is the best,
For the temper of women when broken, e'en heaven can't better the same,
But the pick will regain what it loses with the touch of the hammer and flame,
And for aye will it answer your yearning, be true to the trust that ye place,
But oftimes the falsest of females is fair in the glance of the face,
And fickle, and sure as she's fickle, your sweetheart in labour is true
As long as there's grub on the hot-plate, as long as there's hashing to do,
While the hail-harried winter is scowling, while the skies of the summer are blue.

Enough! for the pick has been trusted, enough! for the pick has been tried

In the uncharted lands of the world, past where the
pathways divide,
Where the many lead into the city of mimicry, aping
and show,
Where one leads away to the vastness, the infinite vast-
ness you know,
And there with the grim pioneer it wrought in the
shine and the shade,
While he feared in the gloom and the silence, afraid as
a child is afraid,
Pleased with his rough hand's caresses, slave to his
wish and his whim —
Away on the fringe of the world, comrade and
brother to him.

Enough, for the pick has been trusted, in hazardous,
desperate years,
When the wine press was trodden alone for the vintage
of sorrow and tears,
Under the blight of the upas, the bane of the vampire's
wing,
Shaping the founs of a temple, razing the keeps of a
king;
To labour that stood as its sponsor for the fiery baptism
given,
It has proved its worth, on a toil-curséd earth, and
under the eyes of heaven;
Staunch in the pitiless combat, vigorous, virile and bold,
To-day I give it the honour our fathers denied it of
old,
To-day I have sung its praises, and told of the honour
due
To the pick that was ever trusted, tried on the dead-
line and true.

THE SONG OF THE SHOVEL

DOWN on creation's muck-pile where the sinful
 swelter and sweat,
Where the scum of the earth foregather, rough and un-
 tutored yet,
Where they swear in the six-foot spaces, or toil in the
 barrow squad,
The men of unshaven faces, the ranks of the very bad ;
Where the brute is more than the human, the muscle
 more than the mind,
Where their gods are the loud-voiced gaffers, rugged,
 uncouth, unkind ;
Where the rough of the road are roosting, where the
 failed and the fallen be,
There have we met in the ditchway, there have I
 plighted with thee,
The wage-slave troth of our union, and found thee true
 to my trust,
Stoic in loveless labour, companion when beggared and
 burst,
Wonderful navvy shovel, last of tools and the first.

Your grace is the grace of a woman, you 're strong as
 the oak is strong ;
Wonderful unto the navvy, the navvy who sings your
 song —
For ever patient, and ready to do what your master bids,
Though you laboured at Beni Hassan, and wrought at
 the Pyramids,
Uprearing the Grecian temple, the gold Byzantium
 dome,

The palaces proud of Susa, the legended walls of
Rome,
In the earliest days of Egypt, in evil-starred Nineveh,
When your masters who be were whirling, inane in the
Milky Way,
In Pompeii of the sorrows, ere the lava of hate was
hurled
From the fiery mouth of the mountain, in the passionate
days of the world.

Older than all tradition, older than Ops or Thor,
Gods of the Dane or Roman, gods of the plough or
war,
In dark preadamite ages used by the primitive
man,
And unto his needs were shapen ere custom and cant
began —
A servant to Talos the Potter were you in the ages
dim —
But you helped in the drift of seasons to fashion the
urn for him.
But you 're foul to the haughty woman, bediamonded
slave of lust,
Who bows to a seignior's sabre, tinged with a coward's
rust,
Foul to the aping dandy with the glittering finger
rings,
You who have helped to fashion the charnel vault of
the kings!
— Ah! the lady fair is disdainful and loathingly looks
askew,
And the collared ass of the circle gazes in scorn at
you,

But some day you 'll scatter the clay on grinning lady
and lord,
For yours is the cynical triumph over the sceptre and
sword!

*Emperors pass in an hour, empires pass in a day,
But you of the line and muckpile open the grave
always.*

Tell me what are thy graces, what are the merits of
thine?
Answer ye slaves of the railway, answer ye dupes of
the mine.
What do you mean to the navy, moleskinned serf of
the ditch,
Piling the courts of pleasure up for the vampire rich?
What do you mean to the muck-men, forespent slaves
of the street?
Life for the wives that love them, food for their babes
to eat,
Who wear their fetters of being, down where no sun-
shine comes
In the Christian country of sorrows, the civilized land
of slums.

Wonderful, ancient shovel, tool of the labour slave!
To you the sparkle of silver the hammer and furnace
gave,
For you the virginal forest was stripped of its stateliest
trees,
And you have the temper that flame has, and you have
the graces of these.
Athens and Rome have known you, London and Paris
know,

You 'll raise the towns of the future when the towns
of the present go —
A race will esteem and praise you in the days that are
to be,
When I am silent and songless and the headstone crum-
bles on me!

*Wonderful navvy shovel, the days are near at hand
When you 'll rise o'er sword and sceptre a mighty
power in the land.*

BY-THE-WAY

THESE be the little verses, rough and uncultured,
which
I've written in hut and model, deep in the dirty ditch,
On the upturned hod by the palace made for the idle
rich.

Out on the happy highway, or lines where the engines
go,
Which fact you may hardly credit, still for your doubts
'tis so,
For I am the person who wrote them, and surely to
God, I know!

Wrote them beside the hot-plate, or under the chilling
skies,
Some of them true as death is, some of them merely
lies,
Some of them very foolish, some of them otherwise.

Little sorrows and hopings, little and rugged Rhymes,
Some of them maybe distasteful to the moral men of
our times,
Some of them marked against me in the Book of the
Many Crimes.

These, the Songs of a Navvy, bearing the taint of the
brute,
Unasked, uncouth, unworthy, out to the world I put,
Stamped with the brand of labour, the heel of a navvy's
boot.

A NAVVY'S PHILOSOPHY

ACROSS life's varied ways we drift
Unto the tomb that yawns in wait,
One ruling o'er the mighty state,
One sweating on the double shift.

I've whirled adown the sinful slope
That leads to chasms of despair,
And dwelt in haunts of hunger where
The spectre sorrow jeers at hope.

My ways are cast with many men
Who fight with destiny and fail,
The down and outers of the jail,
The tavern and the gambling den —

The men who bet and drink and curse,
Who tread the labyrinthine maze
Of sin, who move on rugged ways,
Who might be better — ay, and worse!

My dead-end comrades true as steel,
The men who bravely bear the goad,
The wild uncultured of the road —
Like them I speak just as I feel.

'Neath silver skies with silence shod,
Engirdled by the Milky Way,
And set with stars of brightest ray,
As fits the far-off paths of God,

I've slept with them; in lonely lands,
Ere came the city vomit thence
To take the house and claim the fence
Built with the toil of calloused hands,

I've wrought with them; where gin shops smell,
And stagnant models smut the town,
I've shared their plaints when out and down —
My brothers, don't I know them well!

I've begged with them from door to door,
And thought unutterable things
Of lands where courtiers and where kings
Still grind the faces of the poor.

.
The cold grub eaten in the dawn,
The wet shag smouldering as you smoke,
For ever being down and broke,
You learn to like it — later on.

You learn to like it — for you must,
Though hardly worth the pains you take,
Or yet the sacrifice you make —
The barter for the vital crust.

Of things abstruse I cannot sing
In fitting strains, so let me say,
From hand to mouth, from day to day
Is not the right and proper thing.

.
But let me sing in gayer strain,
The glory of the wilder life,
Apart a little from the strife,
The feline fury and the pain.

Despite the hate insensate which
The fates have borne to crush me low,
I love to watch the puppet show
And count myself exceeding rich.

You say I own no lordly halls,
No parks extending far and wide,
No cornice, column, cusp of pride,
No paintings hanging from my walls.

No hall of pride with fresco decked —?
My mountain pillars rear on high,
My floor the earth, my roof the sky,
And God Himself the Architect.

No paintings from a master's hand —?
My canvas spreads from flower to star
Barbaric, grand, anear, afar,
From sea to sea, from land to land.

No deep cathedral music swells
For me, you say, I own it true,
But under Heaven's gentian blue,
What strains of sweetness fill the dells!

The rustle of the wind-swept trees,
The robin's song at early morn,
The larks above the crimson corn,
What music in the world like these!

All, all are mine. The simple flower,
The ocean in its madding wrath,
The drunken wind that beats my path,
The arched skies that shine or lower.

I've sailed on ships with sails of fire,
By amber ports, through carmine seas,
And opal-tinted argosies,
To dreamt-of islands of desire.

For me the music of the streams,
The tints of gold on heath and furze,
Where wind-blown gorse clumps shake their spurs,
For me the wonder-world of dreams.

While you are selling at the mart,
Or buying souls to glut your greed,
(Who fatten on your brother's need,)
In lonely ways I dwell apart:

Or when the jewelled carcanet
Of Heaven decks the darkling sky,
Beside the cabin fire I lie
And smoke my soothing cigarette,

And dip in some enchanted page,
Or linger o'er a story told
By some grey chronicler of old,
The dreamer of a long-past age.

And as the smoke wreaths rise, meseems
I live in Ind or Babylon,
And share the hopes of poets gone,
The dreamers of æsthetic dreams.

Or sing of Rome, or bleed for Troy,
Or dwell in Tyre or Nineveh —
But ah! 'tis fancy's boundless play,
The wayward dreamings of a boy.

'Tis sweet to write it down in verse,
Or think of it, but all the same,
If e'er you try you'll find the game
Is hardly worth a tinker's curse.

The open road is passing grand
When skimming on a motor car,
But dossing 'neath the pallid star
Is something you don't understand.

In fact you'll hardly realize
While lounging in your drawing room,
How drear December's dirge of doom
Across the snow-clad level flies.

Or how the frosty crowbar sears
The hand that lifts it from the drift —
You'll learn it on the ten-hour shift
Where I was learning all these years.

You'll likewise learn the useful rule,
The motto of the navvy man,
To do as little as you can
And keep your pipe and stomach full.

The song I sing is very rude,
In sin mayhap my life I live,
But ye are wise and will forgive
As none of us are very good.

We sin — we'll sorrow later on!
We laugh — some day we're sure to weep!
We live — by night we'll fall asleep,
And none may waken us at dawn!

And we are brothers one and all,
Some day we 'll know through Heaven's grace,
And then the drudge will find a place
Beside the master of the hall.

THE FAITH OF A CHILD

I 'VE learned the tale of the crooning waves
And the lore of the honey bee,
The Mermaids' song in the lonely caves
Of Rosses by the sea.

For I 'm never let out to the dance and wake,
Because I 'm a gasair small;
But stay at home, for my mother's sake,
And never grow weary at all.

She taught me the lore of the fairy men,
Who live in the haunted rath;
And tells me to pray to Mary, when
I cross the gossamer path.

For it 's true that the gossamer threads are thrown
From the holly tree to the grass,
When the moon-white night is long and lone,
For the fairy band to pass.

But, if ever you cross their way at all,
May Mary be with you then,
For they steal the children into their hall
That 's hid in the haunted glen.

The hall that 's under the gentle thorn,
Where my little brother must stay,
For the fairies came, before I was born,
And stole my brother away.

And mother says he is free from pain
 (They have kept him seven years)
Yet she 'd rather far have him back again,
 And tells me so in tears.

Ah! many a song she has sung to me,
 And many a song she knew,
And many a story there used to be,
 And Mother's tales are true.

So I know the chant of the crooning waves
 And the lore of the honey bee,
And the Mermaids' song in the lonely caves,
 Of Rosses by the sea.

FISHING

WHEN the sheep on the brae are lying still
And the lone lake waters weep,
When the pale-faced moon comes over the hill
And my brothers and sisters sleep,
I wander out by the brooklet's edge
Where moon-limned waters run,
And see the fays from the trailing sedge
Come silently one by one, —

Come silently out to fish for trout
With a hook of silver fine,
A rye-grass stalk for a fishing-rod,
And a gossamer thread for line.

But there is n't a fish in all the brook,
And it's me that ought to know,
For I caught the little minnows and took
Them with me long ago —
I lifted them up from the golden sand
Into my pannikin small,
Yet the fairies stay till the dawn of day
And never catch one at all.

I took the little minnows myself
And left them down in the well,
As nobody saw me place them there,
Sure no one at all can tell
The fairy fishers where they are gone,
The pretty wee fish inside
The well that is marked by St. Colum's cross
And the cross of good Saint Bride!

THE SONG OF THE TRAMPS

THE eager hands will never take us back,
The luring eyes will never draw us home,
With the changing heaven o'er us, and the white road
 stretched before us,
Sure the world is ours to revel in and roam —
We have padded it, alone, afar, apart,
We have roughed it to the ultimate extremes,
Where the blazing dawn-tints kindle, or the sun-kissed
 rivers dwindle
In a land of fairy fantasies and dreams.

Would we linger in the city and the stench,
The alleys and the fetid walls amid,
In the dirt beyond all telling of the festered, filthy
 dwelling
And the gutter degradation — God forbid!
We are not the fools you reckon us to be,
Our woebegone appearances are shammed,
Tho' we act the discontented, on the byways unfre-
 quented,
We are n't so incorrigibly damned.

We doss it 'neath the timid shaky stars,
Where the mountains shrink and cower overawed,
In the gaunt mysterious places, with the dew upon our
 faces,
While the breathless night goes by in silence shod,
As the pallid, leprous, moon above us frets,
By the fitful fire-flames flickering undersized,
We think as men unshriven, of an evil unforgiven,
Of the many hopes we never realized.

Oh! the dreaming and the fancy and the hope,
The wonder and the worry of it all,
The gipsy blood that 's flowing through our veins will
keep us going

On the road while thrushes sing or sparrows fall;
By meadows waving lazily and slow,
By streamlets singing songs of wild desires,
And the eyes of heaven peeping will keep watch above
us sleeping,
And the dawn will see the ashes of our fires.

To the wealth of Mother Nature we are heirs,
The skies of opal, amber, sapphire hue,
The moorland and the meadows, the sunshine and the
shadows,

We love them — for we 've nothing else to do!
The eager hands will never lure us back,
The plaintive eyes can never draw us home,
With the heaven bending o'er us and the white road
stretched before us,
Sure the world is ours to revel in and roam.

THE SONG OF THE LOST

WHAT will be left when the siren city
Ceases to lure and ceases to pay,
When poverty hovers across my way,
When years have sullied my sinful grace?
No mother's love, and no father's pity,
No fondling lover, no children gay,
To plant a kiss on their mother's face.

The kisses I've had were born of passion,
And the love was the lust of brutal men
Wild from the bar or gambling den,
My jewels were bought in a soul's eclipse,
For I was gay in an evil fashion —
Queen of the sodden alley, when
They paid for kissing my painted lips.

Look how the lamps of London twinkle,
Hark how the bells of London toll,
"Pledge thyself for the devil's dole,
Fool of the empty tinsel show —
But what avails when the brow shall wrinkle,
The lone regrets of a stricken soul,
The nightly wail of a sleepless woe?"

FATE

THE cloudwrack o'er the heaven flies,
The wild wind whistles on the lake,
The drooping branches in the brake
Mourn for the pale blue butterflies.

Where is the sheen of green and gold?
The sullen Winter's beard is hoar.
Where are the fruits the Autumn bore?
We know not, who are growing old.

We pulled the dainty flowers of spring,
But we were happy being young —
And now when Autumn's knell is rung
We wither 'neath the vampire wing.

THE BOOTLESS BAIRN

(1909)

DAYS of the whirling snowflakes, nights of the
weeping wind,
That move to a gloomy future, that come from the
dark behind,
Carry upon their bosoms the sorrows of hope defiled —
The wail of the bootless bairn, the cry of the hapless
child.

Not for him is the Christmas and all the sweets it
brings,
Nor does he share the New Year's hope of bright and
beautiful things,
Ah, never for him is the festal board with Nature's
bounties piled,
The wan-eyed bootless bairn — the poor, uncared-for
child.

Oh! why do we prate of our glory and lightning let-
tered fame,
When the winds of the city roadways are breathing
our people's shame?
And ev'ry castle builded is a hundred homes despoiled —
Our fame leaves the bairn bootless, our glory the hap-
less child.

Then it is ours to labour and help with the passing
suns,
To brighten with word and action the lot of the little
ones,
For the sins of our age hang heavy on defiler and defiled,
They fall on the bootless bairn, and crush the hapless child.

THE SONG OF THE CIGARETTE

(1908)

There with a Book of verse beneath the Bough,
A Flask of Wine, a Loaf of Bread, and Thou,
My Woodbine Packet in the Wilderness —
And Wilderness is Paradise enow.

—OMAR KHAYYAM

(As he would write to-day.)

GET thee gone, my erstwhile loved one, I am weary
of your sighs,

Smothered by your fond embraces, tired gazing in your
eyes —

No, I do not want to nurse him — Baby, prattling
little fool —

Would he were a little older, we would pack him off
to school —

No, confound the morning paper, take it from the
blessed room,

I am sick of Peer-less Asquith, Crippen, and the Rub-
ber Boom.

Now the cosy room is quiet, and I hope the world
will let

Me sit down in calm enjoyment to my soothing
cigarette.

Let me see what brand will suit me; ah, it does n't
matter much,

Every cigarette's a pleasure, so I'll take one up as
such;

Oh, the delicate aroma! What perfume could e'er
excel?

Oh, the beautiful tobacco and the life-inspiring smell.

What is wine, and what is woman? Vanity, the
preacher says,
If there's vanity in smoking, I am vain for all my
days.
Slightly changed, what says my Kipling? Recollect
'tis not a joke,
What's a woman? Just a woman, but — a cigarette's
a smoke.

England's kicking up a racket on the passing of the
Peers.
Let them pass, I care not twopence while this smoke
goes past my ears;
What the mischief am I caring if the German army
comes,
I will smoke in peace and paper 'mid the rolling of
their drums;

Let them fly until they're stupid, man was ever vain,
I know,
Why the reptiles (Latin something) flew ten thousand
years ago!
All the world's a show of puppets, and the wisest of
them yet
Sits behind the scenes and calmly smokes a Woodbine
cigarette.

Let the sickly poet picture scenes from his excited mind,
If I'm left unto my smoking then the gods are very
kind;
Let the taxing legislators tax the beer and all the rest,
If they spare my gentle Lady then I'm very surely
blest;
Makers of the law and sufferers, mankind of whatever
stamp,

Prince or pauper, saint or sinner, tyrant, teacher,
tailor, tramp,
Leave me, and I ask for little, but that little I must
get,
Just a cosy spot and silence and a soothing cigarette.

THE SLUM-CHILD

(1909)

THERE is meeting and parting
The wide world over,
Day by day,
Of true hearts and fond hearts,
The maid and the lover,
And thus always.

But never a parting
Will give me sorrow,
And never comes
The hope of the friends
I'll meet to-morrow —
I'm of the slums.

Day and night are forever
So dreary:
I never know
Aught of a friend,
When the heart is weary
To let him know.

But often I pray when the
Night is gloomy,
That God would send,
In all His mercy, from
Heaven to me,
One loving friend.

IN THE MIDNIGHT

A SPLASH on the dusky water,
A cry on the winter air,
As from the pit abysmal
Rises a soul's despair.

The human ghouls of midnight
Shiver beneath the snow,
The painted women in terror
Stand, and listen, and — go.

Up in the deep of heaven,
Gloomy and ghostly grey,
The cry of the lost one falters —
Falters, and dies away.

Only a cry in the darkness,
Only a swirl in the tide,
Only a sinful woman
Crossing the Great Divide!

THE CALLING VOICE

THE great world voice is calling, and the streams
have lost their glory,
For their restless waters journey to the ever-moving
sea,
And I am ever yearning as they seem to breathe a story
Of the better things to be, the better things to be.

The breeze is saying, "Hasten, we will cross the seas
together,
You and I together to a fairer world than this,
Say, does the mountain keep you and the purple waving
heather,
Or the little girl you kiss, the little girl you kiss?"

No more the valley charms me, and no more the tor-
rents glisten,
My love is plain and homely, and my thoughts are
far away,
The great world voice is calling, and with throbbing
heart I listen,
And I cannot but obey, I cannot but obey.

ROAMING

I STEADY my staff at the crossroads, it falls with
the breeze from the south,
I hie to the northern meadows with the kiss of the
morn on my mouth,
The dawn is of opal and ruby, the dew glitters soft on
my breast,
And the road lies away o'er the world, and the life of
the road is the best.

The gossamer lies on the greensward like threads made
of silvery fire,
And the breeze in the hedgerows is singing like strains
of a magical lyre;
There is lure in the woods of the east-land, and health
in the fields of the west,
And the road lieth over the world, and the life of the
road is the best.

I steady my staff at the crossroads, it speaks of a south-
ern land
In the winning and wonderful language the staff and
myself understand,
For wherever it falls I will follow, nor question its
loving behest,
For the road runs the wide world over, and the life of
the road is the best.

PADDING IT

An empty stomach, an empty sack and a long road.
— From Moleskin's Diary.

HASHING it out like niggers on a two and a
tanner sub,
Everything sunk with our uncle, little to burn at the
pub,
Fifty and six were our hours, and never an extra shift,
And whiles we were plunging at banker, and whiles we
were studying thrift —
Sewing and patching the trousers, till their parts were
more than the whole,
Tailoring, cobbling, and darning, grubbed on a sausage
and roll —
Thrift on a fourpenny hour, a matter of nineteen bob,
But we glanced askew at the gaffer, and stuck like glue
to the job,
We of the soapless legion, we of the hammer and hod,
Human swine of the muck-pile, forever forgotten of
God.

“Hearing of anything better?” one to another would
say,
As we toiled in all moods of the weather, and cursed at
the dragging day,
Winking the sweat off our lashes, shaking the wet off
our hair,
Wishing to God it was raining, praying to Him it
would fair.

"Curse a job in the country," one unto one would
reply,
Looking across his shoulder, to see if the boss was by —
Arrogant March came roaring down on the year, and
then
A rumour spread in the model, and gladdened the
navvy men.

Was it the highland slogan? was it the bird of the
north,
Out of its frost-rimmed eyrie that carried the message
forth?

"Jackson has need of navvies, the navvies who under-
stand

The graft of the offside reaches, to labour where God
has bann'd,

Men of the sign of the moleskin who swear by the
soundless pit,

Men who are eager for money and hurry in spending it.
Bluchers and velvet waistcoats, and kneestraps below
their knees,

The great unwashed of the model — Jackson has need
of these."

Then the labourer on the railway laughed at the en-
gine peals,

And threw his outworn shovel beneath the flange of the
wheels.

The hammerman at the jumper slung his hammer
aside,

Lifted his lying money and silently did a slide,

The hod was thrown on the mortar, the spade was
flung in the drain,

The grub was left on the hot-plate, and the navvies
were out again.

All the roads of the Kingdom converged, as it were, to
one.
Which led away to the northward under the dusk and
dawn,
And out on the road we hurried, rugous and worn and
thin,
Our cracking joints a-staring out through our parch-
ment skin,
Some of us trained from our childhood, to swab in the
slush and muck,
Some who were new to the shovel, some who were
down on their luck,
The prodigal son half home-sick, the jail-bird, dodger
and thief,
The chucker-out from the gin shop, the lawyer minus a
brief,
The green hand over from Oir'lan', the sailor tired of
his ships,
Some with hair of silver, some with a woman's lips,
Old, anæmic, and bilious, lusty, lanky and slim,
Padding it, slowly and surely, padding it resolute, grim.

We dossed it under the heavens, watching the moon
ashine,
And a tremor akin to palsy quivering down the spine.
We drank of the spring by the roadside using the hands
for a cup,
Stole the fowl from the farm before the farmer was up,
We lit our fires in the darkness drumming up in the
flame,
Primitive, rude, romantic men who were old at the
game,
On through the palpable darkness, and on through the
tinted dawn,
The line of moleskin and leather fitfully plodded on;

And no one faltered or weakened, and no one stumbled
or fell,
But now and again they grumbled, saying, "It's worse
nor hell."
The rain came splattering earthwards, slaving in our
face,
But we never hinted of shelter and never slackened our
pace,
The mornings were cool and lightsome, we never hur-
ried a bit,
"Slow and easy is better than hashing and rushing it."
Ever the self-same logic, steady, sober and suave —
"The hasty horse will stumble," "hashing to make
your grave,"
"Easy and slow on the jumper, will drive a hole for
the blast,"
"Rome was long in the building, but the grandeur of
Rome is past."

You speak of the road in your verses, you picture the
joy of it still,
You of the specs and the collars, you who are geese of
the quill,
You pad it along with a wine-flask and your pockets
crammed with dough,
Eat and drink at your pleasure, and write how the
flowers grow —
If your stomach was empty as pity, your hobnails were
down at the heels,
And a nor'-easter biting your nose off, then you would
know how it feels,
A nail in the sole of your bluchers jaggging your foot
like a pin,
And every step on your journey was driving it further
in,

Then, out on the great long roadway, you 'd find when
you went abroad,
The nearer you go to nature the further you go from
God.

Through many a sleepy hamlet, and many a noisy town,
While eyes of loathing stared us, we who were out and
down,
Looking aslant at the wineshop, talking as lovers talk,
Of the lure of the gentle schooner, the joy of Carroll's
Dundalk;
Sometimes bumming a pipeful, sometimes " shooting the
crow,"¹
But ever onward and onward, fitfully, surely, slow,
On to the drill and the jumper, and on to the concrete
bed,
On to the hovel and card school, the dirt-face, and
slush ahead.

Thus was the long road followed — true is the tale I
tell,
Ask my pals of the model — ask, they remember
well —
Hear them tell how they tramped it, as they smoke at
the bar and spit,
The journey to Ballachulish, for this is the song of it.

¹ Ordering drink, having no intention of paying for it.

SERFS

IN the lands that the leagueless and lonely, where
fugitive, funeral-paced,
The day drags askance from the darkness to glower on
the destitute waste,
Where raw-ribbed and desolate reaches ruggedly run
to the sky,
Where the grim goring peaks of the mountains sunder
the heavens on high,
Sullen and lowering and livid, furrowless, measureless,
vast,
Pregnant with riches unravished, bearing a recordless
past,
Hemmed with the mists of creation, ferine in fury for-
lorn,
The wilderness reigneth malignant; and who may
abide by its scorn,
Conquer the keeps of its splendour, looting the treasure
it holds,
Damming its turbulent waters, rifling its forests and
wolds,
Bridling its torrents with bridges, its mountain-cliffs
battering down,
Turning its wastes to a garden, moulding its rocks to
a town,
Flouting at famine and failure, sober to suffer and
serve,
Staking their faith against danger in limitless daring
and nerve,

Ne'er recking revenge nor repression, throttle the wild
in its wrath,
Breaking the front of resistance unto the uttermost
path?

And where shall you gather to dare it, men who are
fearless and fit,
Primed with unquenchable courage, daring with Ber-
serkir grit,
Freed from the cant of the city, purged of fastidious
pride —
Men who will strive to a finish, men who are trusted
and tried,
Emboldened by endless endeavour, steel-sinewed, bru-
tish and wild —
Men with the tiger's insistence, and faith of an inno-
cent child?
Go, seek them in pub and in model that steam with the
stench of their shag,
Go, gather them up from the slumland and lure of the
passionate hag,
Seek for the men of the highway, ragged, untutored
and gaunt,
Men who can wrestle with horror and jeer at the ter-
rors of want.
So one by one shall you gather them, one by one shall
you send
Them over the pales of the city, where the roads that
run outermost end.

And there in the primitive fastness, more like brutes
than like men,
They're huddled in rat-riddled cabins, stuck in the
feculent fen,

Where the red searing heat of the summer purges them
drier than bone,
Where Medusa-faced winter in turn stiffens their
limbs into stone.
Hemmed-up like fleas in the fissures, sweated like swine
in the silt,
So that your deserts be conquered, so that your man-
sions be built;
Hair-poised on the joist or the copestone, and swept by
the bellowing gales,
Hauling their burdens of granite, bearing their mortar-
piled pails,
Pacing the tremulous gang-planks as the trestles are
bent by the wind,
With death and danger before them, and danger and
death behind.
Where torments that terribly threaten engirdle the
path that they tread,
As their bedfellows drop at the jumper, the brains
blown out of the head,
Where misfires, burst in the boring, cripple the men as
they fly,
And the dark-clotted blood on the hammer shall tell
of the deaths that they die;
The eyes that are gouged from their sockets, the scars
on the cankerous face
Of the hairy and horrible human, who drops at the
quarry's base;
The wild arms tossed to the heavens, as the outworks
crumble beneath,
The curse of surprise and of horror that is hissed
through the clenched teeth,
The derricks that break at their pivots with the strain
of the burden they bear,
Crushing the men at the windlass before they can utter
a prayer;

The dams rushing wild in the darkness, and hurtling
the flood-gates free,
The riotous rain-swollen rivers, that roll like an inland
sea
Swamping the mud-rimed cabins, and breaking them
up as they run,
Where men curse wild in the midnight, and die ere the
rising sun —
Die in the rush of the freshets screaming in fury and
fear,
As the timbers crunch in the torrent and jam in the
glutted weir;
There, gulping the chalice of sorrow and chewing the
crust of despair,
Thus do the slaves of the ages labour and dreadfully
dare,
Gripping the forelock of failure and bearing the brunt
of the fight,
For the crumbs that shall feed them at morning, the
bunks that shall rest them at night.

And there, stiff-lipped and enduring, stern-eyed, pa-
tient and rude,
Crushing the savage and sinister front of the lean
solitude,
Unto the ultimate barrier, unto the ultimate breath,
Lashed with the scourge of oppression, swept by the
legions of death,
They stumble like curs by the wayside, are flung in the
ditch where they die,
With never a stone to record them under the pitiless
sky;
Never a singer to chaunt them or tell of the deeds they
have done,

The passionate hates that pursued them, the battles
they fought in and won —
How stark as the wilds where they labour, godlike they
conquer or fall —
The courage, the dogged endeavour, the glory and woe
of it all.

These are our serfs and our bondmen, slighted, forsaken, outcast,
Hewing the path of the future, heirs of the wrongs of
the past,
Forespent in the vanguard of progress, vagrant, untutored, unskilled,
Labouring for ever and ever, so that our bellies be
filled,
Building the homes of the haughty, rearing the mansions of worth —
Wanderers lost to the wide world, hell-harried slaves
of the earth,
Visionless, dreamless, and voiceless children of worry
and care,
Sweltering, straining and striving under the burdens
they bear —
Stretches the future before them clouded and bleak as
their past
They are our serfs and our — brothers, slighted, forsaken, outcast.

LOVE

They sin who tell us love can die. — SOUTHEY.

LOVE will live while the pale stars glow, while the
world shall last,
On the present hopes, and in hours of woe, on a dreamy
past,
Love will live, while the flowers bloom, and the
meadows wave;
Nor yet be quenched by the charnel tomb — the
ghastly grave;
For o'er the tomb and the silver stars, to the gates
above
The soul will seek in the great Afar the Endless Love.

PLAYED OUT

AS a bullock falls in the crooked ruts, he fell when
the day was o'er,
The hunger gripping his stunted guts, his body shaken
and sore.
They pulled it out of the ditch in the dark, as a brute
is pulled from its lair,
The corpse of the navvy, stiff and stark, with the
clay on its face and hair.

In Christian lands, with calloused hands, he laboured
for others' good,
In workshop and mill, ditchway and drill, earnest,
eager and rude;
Unhappy and gaunt with worry and want, a food to
the whims of fate,
Hashing it out and booted about at the will of the
goodly and great.

To him was applied the scorpion lash, for him the gibe
and the goad —
The roughcast fool of our moral wash, the rugous
wretch of the road.
Willing to crawl for a pittance small to the swine of
the tinsel sty,
Beggared and burst from the very first, he chooses the
ditch to die —
. . . Go, pick the dead from the sloughy bed, and hide
him from mortal eye.

He tramped through the colourless winter land, or
swined in the scorching heat,
The dry skin hacked on his sapless hands or blistering
on his feet;
He wallowed in mire unseen, unknown, where your
houses of pleasure rise,
And hapless, hungry, and chilled to the bone, he builded
the edifice.

In cheerless model and filthy pub, his sinful hours were
passed,
Or footsore, weary, he begged his grub, in the sough
of the hail-whipped blast,
So some might riot in wealth and ease, with food and
wine be crammed,
He wrought like a mule, in muck to the knees, dirty,
dissolute, damned.

Arrogant, adipose, you sit in the homes he builded
high;
Dirty the ditch, in the depths of it he chooses a spot to
die,
Foaming with nicotine-tainted lips, holding his aching
breast,
Dropping down like a cow that slips, smitten with
rinderpest;
Drivelling yet of the work and wet, swearing as sinners
swear,
Raving the rule of the gambling school, mixing it up
with a prayer.

He lived like a brute, as the navvies live, and went as
the cattle go,

No one to sorrow and no one to thrive, for heaven or-
dained it so —
He handed his check to the shadow in black, and went
to the misty lands,
Never a mortal to close his eyes or a woman to cross
his hands.

*As a bullock falls in the rugged ruts
He fell when the day was o'er.
Hunger gripping his weasened guts,
But never to hunger more —
They pulled it out of the ditch in the dark,
The chilling frost on its hair,
The mole-skinned navvy stiff and stark
From no particular where.*

THE WOE OF IT

SWEET was the mavis' song of eld,
And how the woodlands thrilled with it!
Sweeter the song of the girl I held
Close to the heart that filled with it.

Methinks the rose leant from the wall
To kiss the lily brow of hers;
And through the years I can recall
The softly whispered vow of hers.

We saw the evening fade afar,
And parting, never met again;
And ere we meet, how many a star
Shall rise again and set again.

The mavis' song but brings regret,
The fading rose must know of it:
For she is gone — I can't forget,
And — ah! the bitter woe of it!

THE LONG ROAD

THE white road leads through the meadows, on
through the sunshine and shadows,
The endless road to anywhere, the road the navvy
knows;

Where the mountains soar in their starkness, piercing
the light and the darkness,
The thin road lies like a ribbon, he follows it where
it goes.

He has seen the dewdrops cluster where modest daisies
muster,

He has lain on earth's soft bosom, watched by the
Milky Way,

Out in the places lonely, with the stars and the silence
only,

Chilled with the hate of Winter, warmed with the
love of May.

He has padded alone, while the vagrant breezes bore
him the fragrant

Scent of the wayside flowers, or blooms from the
hills afar,

He has listened the torrents grumble at the hills from
which they tumble,

He has seen the soft night kneeling to greet the even-
ing star.

.

Tired of the reeking hovel, weary of pick and shovel,
He wanders out on the white road in the evening's
sheen of gold,

Watching the light that dims on the western hills of
crimson,
And longs for the last lone slumber and knows he is
growing old.

He goes from the ones who knew him, those who were
kindly to him,
Out on the lonely roadway, under the starlit dome,
And follows the path that flies on into the dim horizon
Where the spectral moon-fire lies on the road that
leads to home.

HAVE YOU —

(On the road to Kinlochleven, 1908.)

HAVE you tramped about in Winter, when your
boots were minus soles?

Have you wandered sick and sorry with your pockets
full of — holes?

Have you wondered which was better, when your capi-
tal was light,

A plate of fish and taters, or a hammock for the night?

Have you smelt the dainty odour of some swell re-
freshment shop,

When you 'd give your soul in barter for a single
mouldy chop?

Have you sought through half the kingdom for the job
you could not get?

Have you eyed the city gutters for a stump of
cigarette?

Have you dossed in drear December on a couch of
virgin snow

With a quilt of frost above you and a sheet of ice
below?

These are incidental worries which are wrong to fuss
about;

But God! they matter greatly to the man who 's down
and out.

Have you sweltered through the Summer, till the salt
sweat seared your eyes?

Have you dragged through plumb-dead levels in the
slush that reached your thighs?

Have you worked the weighty hammer swinging heavy
from the hips,

While the ganger timed the striking with a curse upon
his lips?
Have you climbed the risky gang-plank where a bird
might fear to stop,
And reckoned twenty fathoms would be hellish far to
drop?
Have you swept the clotted point-rods and the red-
dened reeking cars
That have dragged a trusty comrade through the
twisted signal bars?
Have you seen the hooded signal, as it swung above
you clear,
And the deadly engine rushing on the mate who
did n't hear?

If you want to prove your manhood in the way the
navvies do,
These are just the little trifles that are daily up to you.
And if you have n't shared the risk, the worry and
the strife,
Disappointment, and the sorrow, then you know not
what is life.

Have you padded through the country when the Sum-
mer land was fair,
And the white road lay before you leading on just any-
where?
Have you seen the dusk grow mellow, and the break-
ing morn grow red,
And the little diamond dew-drops come to sentinel
your bed?
Though your clothes were rather shabby, and your toes
and knees were bare,
The little silly birdies sure they did n't seem to care;

But just sang to cheer your journey, as they would to
cheer a prince,
For they saw old Adam naked, and they know no
better since.

Have you slouched along the meadows, have you smelt
the new-mown hay?
Have you smoked your pipe and loved it as you plodded
on the way?
Have you bummed your bit of tucker from the matron
at the door
And blessed the kindly woman who had pity on the
poor?
A pipe of strong tobacco (if you get it) after meals
And there's many a scrap of comfort for the man
who's down at heels.

Have you felt your blood go rushing, and your heart
beat strangely high,
As the smoke of your tobacco curled upwards to the
sky,
When lying 'neath a spreading tree that shaded from
the sun
The happiest mortal in the land, it dared not shine
upon.
If you have n't shared the pleasure, that follows after
strife,
You do not know the happiness that fills a navvy's life.

THE SONG OF THE DRAINER

(On Toward Mountain, 1907.)

HE is the Drainer. —

Out on the moorland bleak and grey, using his
spade in a primitive way, through chilly evening and
searing day. Call him a fool, and well you may —

He is the Drainer.

The toil of the Drainer. —

Only the simple work to do, to plod and delve the
quagmire through, for thirty pence, his daily screw. —
The labour is healthy — but not for you,

Just for the Drainer.

The artless Drainer. —

It does n't require a lot of skill to dig with a spade
or hammer a drill, but it's bad enough for a man when
ill with fevery bones or a wintry chill —

Even a Drainer.

The home of the Drainer. —

A couple of stakes shoved into the ground, a hole for
a window, a roof tree crowned with rushes and straw,
and all around a waste where lichens and weeds abound.

Is the home of the Drainer.

The rugged Drainer. —

The sleepy bog breezes chant their hymn, the rushes
and lilies are soft and slim, the deep dark pools the sun-
beams limn — but what do these beauties matter to
him —

The rugged Drainer?

The poor old Drainer. —

Some day he'll pass away in a cramp, where the
sundews gleam and the bogbines ramp, and go like a
ghost from the drag and the damp — the poor old slave
of the dismal swamp.

The hapless Drainer.

Such is the Drainer. —

Voiceless slave of the solitude, rude as the draining
shovel is rude — Man by the ages of wrong subdued,
marred, misshapen, misunderstood —

Such is the Drainer.

THE BALLAD OF MACINDOE

MACINDOE was a Scotchman — had other fail-
ings, too,
Unco sour and moody, hankered as Scotchmen do
After the gill almighty — bibulous MacIndoe!

Out on a steamer southward breasting a heavy swell,
The captain roared, "To the lifeboats," MacIndoe
roared "To H——,"
And stood by a whiskey barrel aboard of the Heather
Bell.

Out in the teeth of the swirling, ranting, riotous sea,
The yardarms battered to larboard, the hatchways
shattered to lee —
(Something like that he told me — the cook of the
Buzzy Bee.)

The Bell went this way and that way, forward and
back again,
Then sank on the seething billows, leaving poor Mac
alane,
Perched on a whiskey barrel out on the Spanish main.

But his was a courage undaunted, courage that never
could fail,
He placed himself up for a mainmast, spread out his
coat for a sail,
And wondering where he was going, he drifted before
the gale.

On to his slippery foothold grimly and gaunt he clung,
Till daybreak its shafts of carmine over the waters
flung —

“Noo,” said the thirsty sailor, “I think I’ll tak’ oot
the bung.”

But the plans o’ a moose or sailor gang aften times
agley,
And you’ll hardly open a barrel, labour and tug as
you may,
Out on the frivolous ocean in the old methodical way.

So Sandy found to his terror, and cursed his luckless
star,
That poor benighted, sweating, swearing, sorrowing
tar,
Who murmured loud in his anguish, “So near and yet
so far.”

He watched the languid ocean in leisurely wavelets
roll;
The fiery sun in the heaven was scorching his very
soul —
“Oh, for a raft of an iceberg, near tae the Arctic
Pole.”

He seated himself on his barrel and pondered on Auld
Lang Syne,
Brose and bannocks and Burns, water and women and
wine,
Then scooped up the waves of the ocean, and drank of
the arid brine.

Below the sensuous waters, above him the heavens
grim —

What was it rose for a moment ominous, vague and
dim?

MacIndoe shuddered in horror — a shark was follow-
ing him!

Night came dreary and darkling, he saw the cleaving
fin

Of the fish draw near and nearer, ugly and fell as
sin —

“God,” said the shivering sailor, “such a fix to be in!”

He tore his coat to ribbons and lashed himself to his
raft,

Slept, and dreamt of devils, woke from his sleep and
laughed,

There was the sign of the monster slowly following aft.

The moon was up in the heavens ghastly, gibbous and
wan,

But not as pale as the lonely, sorrowful, sinful mon,
Who, tied to a whiskey barrel, waited till day would
dawn.

Day and the young day's blushes spread away to the
rear,

The man stood up on his timbers and feared with a
deadly fear,

There was the fin of the monster ever approaching near.

Opal and ruby and diamond glimmered the eastern
sky,

And the waters that circled the barrel laughed to the
sun on high,

“Christ!” — and the sailor shuddered, “a beautiful
day to die.”

He thought of the mother who bore him, he thought
of the homely croft,
Where the heath of the hill was purple, the grass of
the field was soft,
Then he looked to the sky above him, and thought of
the God aloft.

He ventured to kneel to heaven and pray for a drop of
rain,
His knees were creaking and aching, he moaned as a
child in pain,
But found he forgot what the words were, and rose to
his feet again.

Down in the deep below him he saw the sword fish
swim,
The weird uncanny spectres rise from their caverns
dim,
But one still stayed on the surface waiting he knew for
him.

Morning and night and morning, light and darkness
and light,
Hungry when stars were beaming, thirsty when noon
was bright,
Hungry and tired and thirsty and — Heavens, a sail
in sight!

They picked him up from the ocean, the grinning, gib-
bering Gael,
Nude as a nymph on his barrel, using his shirt for a
sail —
Thus they told it to me on the Buzzy Bee,
But I never believed the tale.

THE SONG OF MALONEY

THEY are gambling in the cabin, Moleskin Joe,
Magee and Dan,
There's a splash of stagnant crimson on the lance-
edged hills afar —
I've a whiff of good tobacco, and a bucket in the can,
And a sort of fawning liking for the trembling
evening star,
And my thoughts go roaming, roaming, like an exile's
in the gloaming,
Through the grey fogs of the valley and the cloud
wreaths of the hill,
And I think I see her yet, where in olden days we met,
Awaiting at the corner for her bloke returning still.

Moleskin's plunging bob and tanner, he would call me
such a fool
If he knew what I was thinking in the heel-end of
the day,
But somehow I cannot help it, and I cannot bear the
school,
For my thoughts are ever running to a maiden miles
away,
To a maiden hellish pretty, in the dirty, smoky
city,
Poor as me she is, and poorer, but a year or two
ago,
Ere I came to swine in muck where all nature's down
on luck,
She was more to me I reckon than anyone I know.

O'er the dam, across the breastworks, drops the night
and fills the land,
There are lights inside the cabin, there are many at
the game,
But away down in the city does she ever under-
stand
The reason that I'm lagging, and the why I never
came? —
Maybe she's forgot about me, plodding on her own
without me,
I the roughest card among us, I the plunger at the
school,
And the pallid evening star whispers, "Idiot that you
are!
Do you really think she wants you, you a whiskey-
sodden fool?"

Down behind the mountain ridges, grave-like valleys
gulp the night,
Far below the grave-like valleys lies the town of
which I dream,
With its many lamps aglitter, and the music halls
alight,
And the galleries are crowded, and the footlights
are a gleam,
And perhaps the actress singing, some fond memories is
bringing
Of the kisses in the alley, and the softly whispered
vow —
Here I'm dreaming miles away, she is sitting at the
play,
Maybe thinking kindly of me as I'm thinking of her
now.

And the photo that she gave me, on the lonely night
we parted

I have lost it, 't was the night we tried to clear the
McSurly's bar —

“ Come, Maloney, fill the school up — ” Well, when-
ever you have started

On the downward road, its smoother than the other
road by far —

All right, Carroty, I 'm willing, I have got an extra
shilling —

Mary Somers, oh, she 's hooked up by some collared
city chap,

But perhaps I 'll meet her yet, for somehow I can't
forget —

Shut up, Moleskin, here I 'm coming, is it banker,
brag, or nap?

BAD NEWS

(McSurly's Bar.)

He hugged a delusion in petticoats. — MOLESKIN.

"YOUR flame is marri'd I understand,"
He heard the man from the city say,
He dealt the flats with a shaky hand ¹
And clean forgot the manner of play;
I saw his eyelids quiver a bit,
And Big Maloney was never a saint,
He played the game, made a mess of it,
Yet his partner saw it without complaint.

He shoved the fingers to beat the four,
And led the queen for another's ace,
Then jacked his hand and staked no more,
So Carroty Dan took up his place.
He sat apart on the wooden seat
Pulling a clay that was not alight,
Shaking his head, and shuffling his feet —
Maloney was out of sorts that night.

I noticed the lines on his haggard face,
I heard him sigh. We played the game —
"Moleskin, lead." He led the ace;
Carroty Dan had the Jack for the same.
Some muttered: "There 's more fish in the sea,"
And others remarked: "A maid 's a maid,"
"There is n't another girl for me,"
Was all that Big Maloney said.

¹ He becometh poor who dealeth with a slack hand. —
Prov. x., 4.

Poor Maloney! And still we played —

“Where, M'Kay, is the trump you gave?”

“Well, it is queer,” another said,

“I thought he'd play on his mother's grave.”

But Jim Maloney was looking sad,

Another fellow had hooked his flame,

And some remarked, “Is it not too bad?”

As we shuffled the cards and played the game.

THE PASSING OF MALONEY

IN the chill of anæmic December when the snow on
the ditchway lay,
He bursted the jaw of the gaffer, in an argumentative
way¹
Got handed his couple of shillings and went in the
evening grey —

Into the dip of the hollow a moving speck on the snow,
Bound for the township and model, eighty miles off
or so,
And his comrades leaned on their shovels, and sorrowed
to see him go.

That night they kept from the card school, and smoked
in silence apart,
Swore at the cloud-drift, and listened the night winds
fitfully start,
And felt a chill in the marrow or an icy grip on the
heart.

Quickly he padded the mountain, and dragged thro'
the desolate vale,
And over the gap-toothed ridges, where the flaccid sun-
sets fail,
And the endless cumulus musters glaucous or flaxen
pale.

¹ The opinion of the man who argues with his fist is always
respected. — From the Diary of Moleskin Joe.

Broad-chested, lank Maloney, muscular, strong and
wild,
A Berserkir fierce in his anger, simple in faith as a
child,
The primitive human in moleskin, uncultured and
undefiled.

Crunching and crushing the snow-way, cursing his
luck when he fell,
He plodded unweary, unfearing, by quagmire and tarn
and well,
And a star o'erhead where the cloudrift spread gleamed
like an asphodel,

Gleamed for a tremulous moment, fading as soon as
it shone,
Leaving him lost in the vastness of night and its by-
ways unknown,
With a charnel gloominess girded, affrighted, astray
and alone.

Otiose, obdurate, ominous, drifted the snow in the air,
Gibingly, grim, geomantic, tracing the lines of despair,
Weaving a shroud for his body, shaping a wreath for
his hair.

"Where am I straying to anyhow? Cold! I am cold
to the skin. . . .
Lord, he's a hell of a gaffer! . . how did the quarrel
begin?
Called me an imp of the devil, and managed to get me
my tin.

" I 'm sure I am lost in the darkness — ain't it a horrible fix,
Knowing your final is coming. . . . Curse him, the
imp of old Nick's.
Every foot that I 'm lifting drags like a bundle of
bricks.

" I 'm padding it round in a circle — round in a circle
— and round. . . .
To-morrow they 'll search and they 'll find me, dead
like a brute on the ground.
Dead! . . 'T is the corpse of Maloney, Moleskin will
say when I 'm found.

" Mary, the girl that I courted — how under hell can
it be —
There she 's smiling . . . she 's calling, calling and
beckoning me!
Look at the swarm of demons — and grinning like
blazes they be.

" Shoving it on to a fellow, 'cause you are boss of the
show. . . .
' Here I am raving and raving, wandering round in the
snow,
Going to hell in a blizzard — well, it is time I should
go!

" Drinks to the bar and I 'll stand it, everyone here in
the place. . . .
Turn a man off in the snow-drift — go, or I 'll batter
your face. . . .
Matey, my turn at the hammer — I 'm for a bob on
the ace."

He jacked up his soul in the darkness, and slept in an
angel white shroud,
And the ghouls of the moorland kept litchwake under
the canopied cloud,
When nature was yelling in anguish and the turbulent
tempest was loud.

THE GRAVE DIGGER

I spoke to a man once; asking what he thought of going back to the land and having small holdings. "Very good," he said, "in fact the solution of all ills."

Afterwards I learned that he was a grave-digger.

— From "Gleanings from a Navvy's Scrap-Book."

If some people rose from the dead and read their epitaphs they would think they had got into the wrong graves!

— MOLESKIN JOE.

A GRIM old man with a weazened visage —
What does he dream of toiling there?
Rest should be meet for a man of his age,
Old and weary — but who may care?
There, when the dawn's bright pennon waves,
There, when the fleeting eve fails dimly,
Aloof and alone he labours grimly,
Earning a living, digging graves.

So much a grave, and a soul's in Heaven:
So much a grave, and a soul's in Hell:
For old-world death makes matters even,
The sexton profits, and all is well.
All is well — but the lover raves,
And tears are wet on the downcast lashes.
"Dust to dust, and ashes to ashes,"
Ponders the sexton, digging graves.

Some go into the House of Pleasure,
Some go into the House of Gloom;
The miser hoards up his garnered treasure,
The treasure the rust and moth consume.

Alas! for the wealth the miser saves,
In the House of Pain or the House of Passion.
"He'll need it not in the House I fashion" —
Chuckles the sexton, digging graves.

All are his tenants, lord and lady,
Villain and harlot of low degree,
Simpereing saint, and sinner shady,
Every manner of companie,
Their homes with brainless skulls he paves,
Lily white as alabaster.
"Even the brainless know I'm master,"
Muses the sexton, digging graves.

But there he labours, the cynic sexton,
For all men toil and the sexton must;
Waiting betimes for the silent next one,
Next — not last, to the House of dust.
This is the Home of squires and slaves,
Still from the hall, and stiff from the hovel.
"I'll house them alike with my pick and shovel,"
Chuckles the sexton, digging graves.

A SPRING IDYLL

ON my hangings of arras
Dewdrop and sunlight commingle,
The music of woods that are endless,
And infinite seas
That come with the voices
Of storm or of calm to the shingle
In the lilac grey blush of the dawn,
On the sensuous breeze.

So full of promise is earth
As a child's gentle laughter,
The sapphire tints of the water
Are fair to the eyes —
The present is only,
I know not a past nor hereafter,
And forth from my covering
Of saffron and ermine I rise.

MY DREAM GIRL

LIKE a flower in the mist of the moorland, spectral,
shadowy,
Is she the girl of my dreamings, simple and fawn-like
shy;
Hers the ethereal radiance of heavenly groves and
streams;
Such as the painter pictures, such as the poet dreams.

Out in the open spaces she beckons my spirit on,
She that is born of evening, and fades in the lilac dawn.
She comes from the ports of the flaxen moon on one of
the spirit ships,
Her tresses are night's abysses, the red rose gleams on
her lips,
Through the soft, impalpable ether she has ordered her
ship to go,
By Peristan of the musk-winds, where snow-white spice
flowers blow;
On the manes of the crooning breezes, by fairy lands
untold,
She comes in the guise of a mortal, who never groweth
old;
Through the tangle of gossamer silver the bow of her
vessel cleaves,
And the moonlight opens before it with a rustle of
willow leaves,
Down to the fringe of the moorland where the land
and the heavens meet,
Where the quivering bloom of the heather presses to
kiss her feet,

Prankt in a robe of star-mist tinged with its many
dyes.

And I watch as a lover watches till the transient vision
flies —

The mystic girl of my dreamings, simple and fawn-like
shy,

The flower in the mist of the moorland, lonesome and
shadowy.

LOGIC

“**P**ALMAM qui meruit ferat” — he who wins the palm should bear it, for I certainly admit,
Being but the super-navvy, burdened with the hod,
vous-savez, I’ve no wish to carry it.
I don’t pose as one who knows an awful lot about
Spinoza, or some other ancient seer,
I don’t wear a sort of faintly dawning, growing, super-saintly imitation of a sneer,
But withal I’ve a prolific knowledge of the scientific
which I’ve picked up here and there,
And a little super-added from the lore of those who
pad it on the road to anywhere.

In my knockabout existence, on the line of least resistance, I have plodded day by day,
And of course from the beginning I have done a lot of sinning in a very vulgar way,
And you’ll find I’m no exception in æsthetical perception of the art that lies in lies,
So each item of my tale is to be read, *cum grano salis*, as it will, since ye are wise.

Here a man lays money by him. My life’s rule is
“Carpe diem,” and at last a day will be
When they’ll gladly write, “Hic Jacet,” on a marble slab and place it over him; but as for me,
Everyone can do without me, no one cares a damn about me, no one’s sorry when I slide —
But it is a trifle funny, when he’s dead, the man of money, someone’s hellish satisfied.

I am one of those who know it, it takes more to make
a poet than a mass of flowing hair,
I have tried the thing already, so my friend, "Experto
crede," listen to me and beware.
Homer was a parish beggar, Burns had to measure
lager, or some other beverage,
Poor old Villon had to take a jemmy in his hand to
make an ill-begotten living wage —
What's the good of writing of the stars and skies that
are above the world you rhyme upon so well —
Rhyme in sentimental gushes of your Angelina's blushes
— if your verses do not sell?

.

I have read Montaigne and Dante in the dead end or
the shanty, which you'll certainly agree
May be due in greatest measure to the economic pres-
sure and the hurried times that be —
"Otium cum dignitate," for some problem rather
weighty, certainly I've never had,
For you'll find it hard to learn, all the views of Kant
or Sterne, hashing on the barrow squad —
But apart from that the fact is, if you put it into prac-
tice, put your knowledge into rhyme,
Do it up as this is done up, spin it up as this is spun
up, you are scoring every time.

.

There are lots of folks who clamour that the man who
strikes the hammer, cannot, though he likes to, rise
From the squalor of the masses to the glory of Par-
nassus, which I might remark is lies —
'Tis a pretty wide expansion from the muckpile to the
mansion, some, and many still may rave,
Yet they know (at least they ought to) that tho' far
removed it's not too far from either to the grave.

I have taken oft the oddest little moment for a modest
glance at Tolstoy or at Taine,
While the boss was kicking hell up I've been trying to
develop the resources of my brain,
Or when burst as burst at nap I meditated quite un-
happy on the lore of ancient fools,
On some grim platonic sages who had never lost their
wages in the fishy gambling schools,
On the white road leading through the land of "No one
wants you," to the land of "What you should
have done,"
I have plodded day and daily, sometimes woeful, some-
times gaily, brother of the wind and sun,

For companions I have taken — Shakespeare, Old
Khayyam, or Bacon and have sat beneath the
bough,
But no loaf and flask was near me, so old Bacon
could n't cheer me — Shakespeare had forgotten
how —
Though a lack of education makes one lack appreciation
of the greatest minds of earth,
Still you'll find that ne'er a rub is harder borne than
lack of grub is, while you estimate their worth.

.
If a man says, "Gee up, Neddy," in uncultured words
and ready, suffer him and let him pass,
"Proceed, Edward" is so toffish that it seems a little
offish, when you say it to an ass —
So I hope my wisdom scraps will be esteemed — but
they perhaps will be regarded just as lies,
And remember that my tale is to be read, "cum grano
salis," as it will, for you are wise.

BOREAS

HE threw the pine tree in the fiord,
And down the spumous seas he hurled
The jagged iceberg of the north
To languish in a stagnant world,
And o'er the highway of the skies
The clouds impetuously whirled.

Upon the bald, blank hill we met,
He blustered in insensate wrath,
He caught and flung me like a child,
He shook and bent me like a lath,
Because I dared to flaunt his power,
Because I ventured on his path.

"Zephyrus, Eurus, Africus,
Boreas, Auster, Aquilo,
Or one or all, I know not which,
And care not though I do not know,
Why use your means to work me harm?
And bash and birl and bend me so?

"The flashing lightnings pierce you through,
You bluster vainly at the hill,
Ten thousand times you beat his crest,
Ten million, and he flaunts you still;
You are the fettered slave of man,
You bow obedient to his will."

“ You — you — unblushingly you rave
Of all the pigmy deeds of men —
I’ve swept across the clay that was
Or Paladin or Saracen,
When naked Adam blushed for shame
I gloried in my starkness then !

“ I saw the might of Babylon,
I saw the verdant fields of Thrace,
I marked the Romans in their power,
I’ve seen them in their dire disgrace —
I am ; they were, and Cæsar now
Can’t wipe the maggot off his face.

“ Where is the glory that was Greece?
Let Athens’ crumbling walls reply —
Where is the pride of Nineveh,
Thou shivering fool of destiny?
Between the earth and sky I’ve borne
The ashes that were Pompeii !

“ What is the pride you rave of worth?
What are the things that you have done?
Are all your deeds of deathless fame
From David to Napoleon,
A musty coffin full of dust,
A grimly grinning skeleton ?

“ I bear the scent of briar and rose
Through all the lover-longed-for June,
I hurl the death-black clouds athwart
The silvern oceans of the moon,
I am Siroc and Harmattan,
Solano, Mistral, and Simoon.

" Upon the proud Armada I
Came vengeful and in dreadful shape,
I drove its ships through goaded seas
Where slimy-walled the fissures gape
In many a gloomy, deadly bluff,
In many a chasmed, tusk-edged cape.

" The ringed and sworded buccaneers,
They blessed me in the siren breeze,
I lured the Vikings wild and rude
Across the icy northern seas,
And then I laughed their faith to scorn,
And swept their laden argosies.

" Beyond the reaches of the stars,
Impearled byways of the night,
In dark abyssmal zarahs, far
I've ventured on my endless flight,
Beyond the thrones of gods unknown,
And margents of the infinite."

He came I wist not whence, nor where,
The bluster ready on his lip,
He fled, and left me wondering,
Impotent, helpless, from his grip —
Despite it all, I felt with him
A sort of roving fellowship.

THE NAVVY CHORUS¹

'T WAS in the beginning of ages,
To the make of the navvy there came
Work and the lowest of wages
Ever a mortal could claim,
Bread, with its age for leaven,
Rows, and the prison cell,
Few of the gifts of heaven,
And most of the vices of hell,
Time, and dislike to do it,
Love, for the wine when red,
And a bibulous leaning to it
Despite what the sages said.

And the demons took in hand
Moleskin, leather, and clay,
Oaths embryonic and
A longing for Saturday,
Kneestraps and blood and flesh,
A chest exceedingly stout,
A soul — (which is a ques-
tion open to many a doubt),
And fashioned with pick and shovel,
And shapened in mire and mud,
With life of the road and hovel,
And death of the line or hod,
With fury and frenzy and fear
That his strength might endure for a span
From birth, through beer to bier,
The link 'twixt the ape and the man.

¹ Cp. Swinburne. *Atalanta in Calydon*, Shepherd's Chorus.

They gave him a will to strive
And earn the pittance which
Can barely keep him alive
To slave in the dirty ditch —
Poorhouse and prison they wrought,
So he might enter therein
When idleness fell his lot
Or poverty led to sin.
They have given him transient joys,
They have given him space for delight,
The model, its riot and noise,
And night, and the fleas of the night,
The jeer of the better dressed neighbour,
And curses to every breath,
Labour, and dodging of labour,
Foreknowledge of sudden death —
Foredoomed to go to the devil,
He carries a swearing gift.¹
His life is a path of evil
Between a shift and a shift.

¹ Swearing is not a habit but a gift. — From the Diary of Moleskin Joe.

TWENTY-ONE

We spend our years as a tale that is told badly. — From Moleskin Joe's Diary.

DOSSING it here in the model, dreary, bedraggled,
dry,
They're cooking their grub on the hot-plate, and I
have got none to fry,
But still there's a bed for twopence, so I'll go to sleep
if I can,
Go a boy to my slumber and rise to-morrow a man.

Twenty and one to-morrow, twenty and one and not
A cent for the weary years that with shovel and bar
I've wrought —
Out on my own since childhood, down on my luck
since birth,
I who belong to the holiest civilized land on earth.

I've done my graft on the dead line, where the man
with the muck-rake is,
Where the model smells I have dossed it in this woeful
world of His,
While others were spending their springtime learning
to please and pray,
I've fought for my right of living my own particular
way.

Oft I put cash to the bankers, banked it and lost till
broke,
Watching it tanner by tanner pass to the sharper's poke,

And many a night in the hovel brag was the game we
played,
When I who was versed in the shovel fell to a heavy
spade.

Horses ran on the race course and won as a matter of
course —
I've lost a tribe of money backing the other horse.
Beer, the hope of the dead-line! beer, the joy of the
soul!
Why would I pine and worry when beer can make me
whole? ¹

And money is round to go round. Horses and wine,
and yes,
Women are fond of finery, women are fond of dress —
Oh, pretty as girls are pretty, usual hair and eyes,
Golden and blue, etcetera, choke full of smiles and sighs.

Eyes of a luring siren, a hell of a blarneying tongue,
Old are the arts of women, and I was so very young,
Another came round to woo her, and sudden she took
to it,
I hugged a delusion in hairpins, got done like a frog
on the spit.

Seven years on the muck-pile — God, but I'm feeling
sick!
Sick of the slush and the shovel, sick of the hammer
and pick,
Labour endless and thankless, labour that's never
done —
Is it sinful to doubt of Heaven at penniless twenty-one?

¹ Let him drink and forget his poverty. — Prov. xxxi., 7.

Not the price of a schooner, and, Lord, but I 'm feeling
dry;

They 're grubbing it up on the hot-plate, but I 've got
nothing to fry —

Still I can doss on twopence, and I 'll go to sleep if
I can —

Go a boy to my slumber and rise to-morrow a man!

THE WATERS

PLACID it lies as death and passionless as the grave,
With the pallid moonbeams flung like corpse-lights
o'er its wave,

Stuck in the hunch-backed hill, sluggish, silent, apart,
Brooding in durance vile, sad in its inmost heart,
Whimpering around the face, the sluice and the hard-
fast wall,

The great dam slumbers alone, sore of its endless
thrall —

Down at the slimy base men toil in the dreary pit,
Under the shadow of night, cowering under it.

Freed from their prison walls, glad from the pent-up
place,

Down the trough of the hill streamlets on streamlets
race

Mad with the joy they feel, full of a wild desire,
Springing from ledge to ledge in molten silvery fire.

One by one they rise, the makeshift, rough-cast huts,
Where the knoll across the run of the little waters juts,
Here by the hot-plate's glow the shivering, shabby
tramp

Spells out the "Betting News" in the glare of the
naphtha-lamp,

One man handles his gold, another writes to his love,
In the reeking gloomy hut in the shade of the dam
above,

A dozen crowd to the school, watching the gamblers
play —

* * *

A crash on the face of the hill, and the maddened dam
gives way!

A swirl, and the walls go down, the walls and the
watchers both,

A screech as the girders jamb — a prayer that is half
an oath;

The sluggish sand-hole spews, swallows and spews again,
The cesspool fills and chokes the throat of the sated
drain.

The flood breaks over the wall, foaming in ecstasy,
The black mud scurries before as it shivers the sluices
free,

The mountain shrubs upturn, effortless share its path,
It madly whirls on the bend in all its riotous wrath.

“Winning! a running flush — *Christ! has the dam
gone loose!*”

The tramp gets up with a curse, grasping his
“Betting News,”

The gamblers gather their stakes, curious, undismayed,
The miser grabs at his wealth, the lover rises afraid,
The bulging wall breaks in, the roof falls through at
a blow,

A moment to think of a prayer, and breathe it before
they go —

A moment, and then the flood reels through the broken
wall,

Caught like fleas in the fire, they splutter and choke
and fall —

Down the face of the hill, the waters roar as they
spread,
Bearing in braggart glee their freight of unshriven dead.

*They builded a wall of stone with cunning, patience and
skill,*

*And the waters sulked behind brooding on every ill,
Till their pent-up rage broke forth on the men who
curbed their will.*

THE BALLAD OF THE LONG DAM

'T WAS on the day the Dam gave way, I mind it
awfully well,
Moleskin Joe and Carroty Dan had a row about Riley's
gel —
Good for a chew! Well, seeing it's you, I think I'll
yarn it out;
Just turn your eye on that wall hard by, and see is the
boss about.

Wal, first let me tell how Riley's gel was pretty as
women go,
And whiles she went out with Carroty Dan, and whiles
she went out with Joe,
The way of a man with a maid, 't is said, is strange,
and it's scripture true,
But stranger by far you'll find they are, the wonder-
ful ways of two.

Day in and out it was fight about, night after night
the same,
And they batter it here, a trifle queer, as there ain't
no rules in the game,
A throw or a grip, a kick or a trip, no wool-padded,
kid-gloved play
You can go for your man in any style your own pe-
culiar way.

'T was on the day the Long Dam burst, Moleskin he
bummed his sub,

And went and got boozed as he often did down at the
nearest pub,
Primed to the neck he weltered back, and sought out
Carroty D.,
And the rest of us quickly formed a ring for the fight
that we knew would be.

'T was a fight and a half that blessed day, and as hard
as ever I saw,
Moleskin Joe had the track of a blow of a shoe on his
bearded jaw,
Carroty Dan had some teeth bunged out, and his eyes
bunged up as well,
When some one shouted, "The Long Dam's burst,
slide like the very hell!"

We heard the piles in the breastwork creek, break like
a twig and fall,
We saw the riotous water crash over the broken wall,
The roots and the furze and the rocks uphurled, go
like a wash of snow,
Then sudden I minded of Riley's gel alone in the hut
below —

Alone in the path of the loosened flood. . . . I ran
like the very wind,
With hurl and groan, by hollow and stone, I heard it
breaking behind,
I heard it urge its curling surge to the moan of the
failing stay,
And charge the banks in endless ranks forcing its head-
strong way.

And still the waters vomited forth, on cabin and copse
and bent,

And still on my errand lightning-winged over the ridge
I went —

How I got saved, and how we were saved, is more than
I 'm fit to tell,

But I mind of beating it by a neck along with old
Riley's gel.

That is the tale. 'T is a dirty job, and ours is a rotten
trade,

It takes a while to gather a pile with the help of a
shovel and spade —

There 's Moleskin there a-shovelling dirt, and Car-
roty with a hod,

And Riley's daughter 's married to me — honest, so help
me God.

“HELL!”

(McSurly's Bar, 1911.)

COME gather, boys, together and we'll gulp a cup
to cheer us,
Tho' the night is slinking past, let us be blythe,
We have done our graft and stuck it, boys, though
death was ever near us

All the way from Kinlochleven to Rosyth.
We have wrought in all the wide world's outside
reaches,

And you'll never find us chickens at our work;
We have clinched with toil and terror, and have mated
woe and error —

'T was up to us, and, boys, we did n't shirk.

But 't was hell — pure hell — the while it lasted,
And cursèd little wages for the pain,
But 't was up to us to do it, and by Cripes we managed
thro' it,

And to-morrow — it will be the same again.

Do you mind the nights we laboured, boys, together,
Spread-eagled at our travail on the joists;
With the pulley wheels a-turning and the naphtha
lamps a-burning,

And the mortar crawling upward on the hoists,
While our hammers clanked like blazes on the facing
Where the trestles shook and staggered as we struck,
While the derricks on their pivots strained and broke
the crank-wheel rivets

As the shattered jib sank heavy in the muck.

It was hell — pure hell — from start to finish,
And when it's done, our labour will atone,
For all we did in strife and wrong the wild and erring
life along —
Of us, who know the hell of it alone.

Do you mind the nights we fought, and drank and
lusted
When the wild red blood was up and sense was
gone,
There is much we can discuss about, and plenty too to
curse about,
The brutal lusts that led forever on.
How we wooed the bright-eyed women of the gutter,
How we squared our many quarrels with our fists,
When 't was "Rush the blessed shack again," and
"Strike the beggar back again,"
And "If your man is clinching, break his wrists."

But 't was hell — pure hell — the way we did it.
It was — "Up and burst your fellow if you can," —
The maids we used to walk about, the things we used
to talk about,
Are those which make a devil of a man.

So drink to what we'll do, and what we've finished,
We'll spend the money wildly as we wrought;
Let pious people chatter, why to them it does n't matter
If we drop below the quarry face or not.
But they talk a little rot about our morals,
And rave a little cant about our shame,
But, boys, they do not know of it, the trebly cursèd
woe of it,
'T is we who know, the players in the game.

And 't is hell — pure hell — and we have seen it,
Our comrades dropping wildly off the slips,
When outworks broke to fall apart, when landslides
shoved the wall apart,
They died like men, with curses on their lips.

The lives that snapped in death, sure they 'll remind us
Of the sorrow striking fiercely to the core,
The endless toil before us, the nameless graves behind
us,
Where our stricken comrades perished by the score.
These are the little facts that make us brutal,
The things that make us curse above our breath,
The furious fight infernal, that is ours to wage
eternal —
The tragedy more horrible than death.

But it is n't in our power, my boys, to mend it,
So we 'll face it to the final with a curse;
But it 's hell — pure hell — until it 's ended.
And ended — well — it — can — be — nothing —
worse.

THE CONGER EEL

THE waters dance on the ocean crest, or swirl in
the cyclone's breath,
But down below where the divers go, they sullenly
sleep in death,
Where the slime is holding the cutter's stays, where
the sailors' bones are white,
Where the phantoms sweep through the eerie deep in
realms of endless night,
'T is there it holds its sway supine, and plaits its every
reel,
The silent, sibilant, sombre, sinuous, stealthy Conger
eel,
The silky Conger eel, the solemn-eyed Conger eel —
It circles by where the dead men lie, the spectral
Conger eel.

The devil fish, grim in its cavern dim, a sinister siren
lies,
And the shark will seize on its frightened prey where
the spumous surges rise,
The dolphin may play in its riotous way where the
waters are calm and slow,
The whale may spout like a geyser out by the ice of an
Arctic floe,
But down a hundred fathoms or more below the lance-
edged keel,
It sliily slides, 'neath the shifty tides, the sensuous Con-
ger eel,

The lily-soft Conger eel, the green-eyed Conger eel,
It grovels in grime and the stagnant slime, the hideous
Conger eel.

And there in its sluggish realms of woe it has reigned
for unnumbered years.

It feasted of old on the vikings bold, and the Spanish
buccaneers,

And kings and the sons of kings have gone to lie on its
banquet board,

And many a lady young and fair from the arms of her
drowning lord —

But down below no blush of shame comes to the lips
that steal

The kisses soft from the lady fair; the passionless
Conger eel

The cynical Conger eel, carnivorous Conger eel,

May lie on the breast of the maiden chaste and never
a tremor feel —

That vampire Conger eel.

BACK FROM KINLOCHLEVEN

And the place that knew him, knows him no more.

THE waterworks are finished and the boys have
jacked the shovel,
See, the concrete board deserted, for the barrow squad
is gone,
The gambling school is bursted, there is silence in the
hovel,
For the lads are sliding townwards and are padding
it since dawn.
Pinched and pallid are their faces from their graft in
God-shunned places,
Tortured, twisted up their frames are, slow and lum-
bering their gait,
But unto their hopeful dreaming comes the town with
lights a-gleaming,
Where the bar-men add more water, and the shame-
less women wait.

Eighteen months of day shift, night shift, easy, slavish,
long or light shift,
Anchorites on musty bacon, crusty bread, and evil
tea,
Sweated through the Summer till grim Winter came a
hoary pilgrim,
Chasing from the meagre blanket the familiar,
flighty flea.¹

¹ The wicked flea, that all men pursueth. — MOLES KIN JOE.

Then the days when through the cutting came the
death-white snowflakes drifting,
When the bar was chilled and frosted, and the
jumper seared like hell,
When the hammer shook uncertain in the grimy hands
uplifting,
And the chisel bounced uncanny 'neath the listless
strokes that fell.

But to Him give thanks 't is over and the city fills the
distance,
On the line of least resistance they are coming sure
but slow,
How they wait the trull and harlot, jail-bird, vaga-
bond and varlet,
For there's many a bob to squander and the city
ravens know!
Parasites from pub and alley welcome in the grimed
and greasy,
Gather round with wail and plaudit, eager for their
dough and gin,
They are coming from the muck-pile and they mean to
take it easy,
They have pals to share their joy and incidentally
their tin.

They are tabid and outworn, unpresentable, unshorn,
Occupants of many a model, wooers of the harridan,
Workers of the wildernesses, dressing as the savage
dresses,
Crawling in the rear of progress, following the
march of man.
Where grim nature reigneth lonely over gelid places,
only

Known to death and desolation, they have roughed
it long and hard,
Where the chronic river wallows in the refuse of the
hollows,
And the thunderbolt is resting on the mountain tops
it scarred.

But 't is over for the moment, and the heel-end of
creation
Vomits back the men who roughed it to the town
that sent them forth,
They who face the death it threatened with a grim
determination,
They who wrestled with the slayer incarnated in
the North —
Go and see them primed with lager, drain them of
the coppers sought for
In the depths of desolation, in the byways of the
beast,
Go and bum them of the ha'pence that like maniacs
they wrought for,
For they bear the famine bravely, but can never
stand the feast.

They are coming to the city, soon you'll see their
rants and quarrels,
See them marching off to prison, see them drinking
day by day,
In the dead end of their labours they forgot your code
of morals,
They are ne'er intoxicated in the super-saintly way.
You will know them by their reeking shag, you'll
know their way of speaking,

You can spot them by their moleskins and their
bluchers battered down,

They are wild, uncultivated, maybe rather under-
rated —

But at any rate you 'll know them by their curses
when in town.

THE DEATH OF MOLESKIN

Here lies the remains of John Todd,
Not dead, but drunk, by God!

— MOLESKIN.

JOE is dead? Of course he is,
Dead as any nail can be,
Look upon that face of his —
See, if you are sober, see
The unutterable peace
Stamped upon his countenance —
See, and let your prattle cease,
Give the dead man half a chance.

Joe is dead? Of course he's dead;
Hair dishevelled on his brow,
Lay him on the model bed,
Nought avails to wake him now.
See, the jar is almost full —
Look, I've piles and piles of dough —
Moleskin, have another pull.
Not an answer. Poor — old — Joe.

Give the fallen man his due,
He was one that always could
Take a modest pint or two,
Just as any navvy should,
Do a week or two in jile,
Strike a bargain with a fence,
Fight his man in perfect style,
Play the game, and stump the pence.

Poor old Joe is lying dead
Drunk as e'er a man can be,
Lay some lager near his head
So when waking he may see —
Softly let us go to sleep,
Be your voices hushed and low.
Hark his snoring loud and deep —
Peace be with your slumber, Joe.

CHOSSES DU SOIR

(From the French of Hugo.)

CHILLY the eve, and the silent mist
Veils the moon in a mystic haze,
The cattle go down by the waterways,
And the skyline glimmers like amethyst.

A silhouette on the lonely dune
The traveller shows twixt earth and sky,
And fretfully cawing the rooks go by,
Shrinking in fright from the leprous moon.

The witch sits down, a ghoul at her throat,
And over the tarn the goblins call,
The spider has spun its web on the wall,
And waits for its prey and wearies not.

*This of old was thy song, Ivon —
The song is living, the singer gone.*

Apart the storm-chased luggers fly,
The straining mainmast is stripped and bare,
And the billows sing to the whirling air
A dirge for a failing dynasty.

The coach goes rumbling along the road,
The road that leads to the wide world's end,
Carrying, mother or wife or friend —
Pity the ones who to-night are abroad.

On the hillside lone the graveyard is,
A cross, a flower, a written stone,
The worm that crawls on the skeleton,
And the mouldering lips that we loved to kiss.

The fire is bright on the cottage hearth,
The kettle sings in an undertone
A song of joy that is all its own,
And children are full of idle mirth.

*This of old was thy song, Ivon —
Where is the wayward singer gone?*

THE SONG OF WERNER

(From the German of Scheffel.)

O ROMAN maid! why do you try
To win a heart you cannot hold
With honeyed word and witching eye?
For ah! the ancient fire is cold.

Beyond the virgin Alpine snow,
My lady sleeps beside the Rhine —
Upon her grave three roses blow,
Her grave — who was the love of mine.

O, maid of Rome! you cannot move
The heart that sorrow steeped in gloom;
For me alone but one to love,
My lady sleeping in the tomb.

THE SLAVE

What mean ye that ye beat my people into pieces, and grind the faces of the poor? — Isai. iii., 15.

THE olden chronicles tell us Akbar the slave was strong,
On the woes of his brothers in bondage he brooded and sorrowed long,
Akbar, the slave of Reienos, scarred with the iron and thong.

He toiled in the field and forest and furrow early and late,
Dragging through ruts and ridges, with slouching and servile gait;
But Akbar the slave was human, and Akbar the slave could hate.

Under the goad of the master, sweating as horses sweat,
Scorned by the page and lady appareled in satinet,
The sinewy slave could suffer, suffer and not forget.

.

When the heat of the day was over and the tremulous stars looked wan,
When night hung low on the turret, drawbridge and barbican,
Into the darkling forest stealthily stole a man.

Silent as steals a panther, quick as a wolf on prowl,
A shadow among the shadows, almost unseen by the
owl,
As the watch dog saw the figure in awe it filled the
night with its howl.

In a hut in the depth of the thicket, rugged, misshapen,
rude,
Akbar the slave of Reienos in the spiritless solitude,
With the cleverness hate had given, fashioned a slab
of wood.

The prong of a graip for a gimlet, a sharpened spade
for a plane,
He shapened it level and specular, smooth as the shield
of athane,
Toiling alone in the darkness, filled with a passion
insane.

With withes of the seasoned willows he tied it as firm
as steel
Down to the bench in the dwelling, filled with a giant's
zeal,
Then made he with maniac labour a grim and horrible
wheel.

With the rim of flexible pinewood, the lissome fir for
the spoke,
A groove and a rope around it, a turning handle of
oak,
Thus Akbar spoke in the darkness, timing his ham-
mer's stroke —

“ The brutes of the byres are tended, there is food for
the hunting pack,
He has trampled the crumbs from his table, the crumbs
that my brothers lack,
Reienos has tortured and lashed us — now I will pay
him back.

“ Lord, I have waited to see Thee strike him down in
his crime,
I who am nearly outworn, whipped like a cur in my
prime,
Vengeance is Thine it is spoken, but I cannot abide
Thy time.”

.

The arrogant Lord Reienos strode through the woods
alone,
Far through the gloomy forest thinking of things
unknown,
Reienos the strong and fearless, hard of heart as a
stone.

As a panther hangs on its quarry, as a vulture circles
afar,
A sinister figure followed, silent as moves a star,
Akbar, the grim avenger, marked with the sear and
the scar.

The rufescent sun sank westward, tingeing with ver-
meil dyes,
The shimmering leaves of the forest, the gentian dome
of the skies,
And showing the tigerish hate in the villain's passion-
ate eyes.

A crash in the brake behind him, like when a boar
breaks through —
Reienos turned in anger, turned, and saw, and knew —
And the slayer laughed in the silence for the deed he
lusted to do.

Laughed and laid hold of his master, gripped him
fiercely and strong —
Seized like a leaf in the cyclone, borne as a straw is
along,
Reienos thought on his Maker, Akbar remembered the
thong.

In the zest of the whirlwind foray Reienos had led
the way,
When the noise of the shields and spears rang to the
vault of day,
But death at the hands of a villein — Reienos began
to pray.

Into the gloomy cabin drear as the pit of dread,
Down on the slab he placed him, his hands above his
head,
Tied to the wheel, his body fastened with withe and
thread.

“ Pray to heaven for mercy as your hours are almost
done,
The lowly slave at your castle may look on the mor-
row’s sun,
But two will pass ere it rises, and thou, Reienos, art
one —

"One, and I am the other — strung from your castle
wall —
Pray — I have prayed for years outside your lordly
hall,
But God in Heaven was busy watching the sparrows
fall."

.
Flaxen pale the moonshine glimmered on dune and
tree,
A groan came borne on the breezes, lone and piteously,
A wheel is turned in the cabin, a maniac laughs in glee,

A meteor streaks the impearled dome with its fiery
light,
Cluster on cluster they sparkle stars that are diamond
bright,
Another turn in the torture, another moan in the
night.

.
Falling as falls the spice flower adown the mane of the
breeze,
Slowly the molten moonfire fell on the bearded trees,
Where the eerie midnight vampires bowed at their
fetishes.

Borne in dismal cadence, the groans of the sufferer
Sank away in the silence, died on the midnight air,
And only the grim avenger watched by the body
there.

.
They found the slave in the dawning, beside the lord
of the hall,

They hung him in scorn and fury, high from the castle
wall,

The man who wept for his people, the man who tired
of his thrall.

.

Only an ancient story, fraught with its weight of woe,
Of the love of a slave for freedom, and the hate that
crushed him low —

Only an outworn story, now — as in long ago.

A GEOLOGICAL NIGHTMARE

THE lurid volcanoes were guarding the pole,
The sinister flames reached the Northern star —
I wandered through ages untold with my soul
And the grim fellowship of the plesiosaur,
In the regions of felspar and red syenite,
Where the mammoth was romping in furious glee,
Where the ichthyosaur chased the slim belemnite,
Through the lava-tinged waves of a Triassic sea.

On the clubmoss I saw the wild dinosaur feed,
From the primeval tree swung the anthropoid ape,
Through the network of fern and cyad and reed
Crashed the long brontosaur of the cumbersome
shape;
The grim armadillo that wallowed in slime,
The lizard and serpent that flew in the air,
Looked weird in that eerie pre-adamite time
'Neath the luminous sun or the stellary bear.

.

But where are they gone to, the mammoth and auk?
The dodo and dragon — say, where are they gone?
In the Triassic beds and the Eocene chalk
They have fallen asleep and are slumbering on.
The knight of the sickle has numbered their days,
And Nature embalmed them in shells and in stones,
And we their descendants in boundless amaze,
Discuss them, or pore on their fossilized bones.

Thus *we* even pass from the gentian dome,
And follow the trail of the monsters that saw
The heaven of stars that ne'er glimmered on Rome,
Adown to the vale of ineffable awe —
We go with the pallor of fear on our face,
They went from the fight with the bloodstain and
scar,
And the man and the maiden must rest in the place
Where they wait them the dragon and ichthyosaur!

THE PIONEER

HE was a servant boy, and he
Married a maid of his own degree,
Rented a plot of the mountain lands,
And faced the wild with willing hands,
Where the whortleberry and monkshood grew,
And the night-shade steeped in the poison dew.
The juniper covered the rocky ledge,
The bramble grew to the torrent's edge;
The meadow land was rough and damp,
With here a rock and there a swamp;
The pines came flocking around his door;
The cold spring oozed through the cabin floor,
But, save for his wife, companionless,
He raised his hands to the wilderness.

The pine went down before his axe,
The scanty corn grew up in his tracks,
With shovel and spade the mead was drained,
With weary labour the brook was chained,
With his simple faith, and two men's power,
A giant he wrought through sun and shower,
And of every yard he dared dispute
With the wild, it drove him back a foot,
For its ways are many, its strength is great,
And man is conquered soon or late.

The woman died in a twelvemonth's space,
And left him alone in the gloomy place;
But sorrowful, silent, yet unsubdued,
He delved and drilled and hammered and hewed,

Clearing the brambles, breaking the stones,
Till the fever set in his aching bones,
And the jeering wraith of the wild in wrath
Flung him in scorn from out its path.

Then the corn rotted, the drain fell low,
Again the bramble began to grow,
The sapling grew by the fallen log,
And he died in his hut as dies a dog,
Shivering, thirsty, afraid, alone,
Unhappy, uncared for, and unknown. * * *
This is the story fraught with fear,
The tale of the rustic pioneer.

After him came the mine and mill,
A city was built upon the hill;
There bearded fools in the council sat,
And jabbered their views upon this and that,
But no one knew or cared to hear,
The tale of the early pioneer.

THE HOUSE OF REST

UNTO a land unknown to me I came on some
 strange mission sent,
A lonely pilgrim from the night I wandered on a
 wonder way,
And said, "I'll seek athrough the world for rest and
 unalloyed content,"
And sought beneath the frigid stars, and sought be-
 neath the fretful day.

I saw the House of Toil, and there the people died for
 lack of bread,
There gnawing hunger kept her rule relentless o'er
 the battered roof,
And in the House of Love they wept for spoken words
 and words unsaid —
I gripped my staff in mute despair and firmly kept
 myself aloof.

The House of Wealth was fair to see, all damascened
 and diapered,
But inside riot reigned supreme, and sated men had
 blighted health,
While outside gaunt-eyed forms went by, and starving
 children's cries were heard,
And godless ones with sinful souls crept in and ran-
 sacked it by stealth.

The House of God was passing grand, with moulded
arch and sculptured door,
With picture, psalter, pulpit, pew, with printed
prayer and priceless pyx,
But from within an endless wail was wafted upwards
evermore,
And hair was rent and sackcloth worn beneath the
silent crucifix.

The House of Azreel stands alone, and greater than
abyssmal night
The gloom of it, and depth of it, unruffled by the
softest breath —
The door is ope, I enter there, and dressed in robes of
pallid white,
I greet the worm, and rest me in the House of
Azreel and of Death.

And here where never mellow morn may send a ray
of light or bliss,
Where never lingering winds are borne, where never
maiden's voice is heard,
Afar from holiness and hate, from kindness and the
soulless kiss,
I sleep content for endless years and never wish to
speak a word.

THE OLD MEN

THERE 'S a handful of meal in the barrel, and a
little oil in the cruse,
We wear out our thin-soled sandals, they tan for the
next year's shoes,
And whet their axe at the grindstone, while ours hangs
blunt on the wall,
And willingly shapen the roof-tree, though ours is ready
to fall.
The old fleece rots on the wether, the new fleece whirls
in the loom,
They weave the cloth for the bridal, we fashion the
shroud for the tomb,
Who followed the path as we found it from dawn to
decline of day,
Till the great world lies behind us, before us the
lonely way.

Our sons go into the forest, our sons go out to the
mead,
And labour with saw or with sickle, everyone unto his
need,
Our daughters will meet them at even, with smile and
with simper and sigh,
And the love that their mothers bore us, in days that
have drifted by;
On their lips the red blood crimsons, and their golden
tresses glow,
But we 've seen the red lips whiten and the tresses turn
to snow.

What makes us envy the moments they snatch from the
 swift-winged fate,
And the fury that follows after, catching them soon or
 late?
Some fierce inherent hatred the brute of the wilderness
 bore
As he lost command of the wolfpack when young and
 swift no more,
Some olden envious instinct the hoary chieftain had
When the reins of his despot power passed to a beard-
 less lad;
Ours is the useless prattle, the solace of Solomon,
When he loathed the maids of his harem, and the days
 of his lusts were gone,
With the scorn of the young to goad us, and the doom
 that dogs our feet,
We are the olden cynics, wise in our own conceit.

There's a handful of meal in the barrel, and a little
 oil in the cruse,
Which our toothless loves will bake us — we who are
 little use —
Let our sons go out to the hunting, let our daughters
 simper and smile;
We wait for the welcome summons — only a little
 while,
For we are the useless old men, wrinkled and bent and
 grey,
With the things we have done behind us, before us
 the lampless way;
We are the useless old men with faltering, failing
 breath,
With a stake in the great Hereafter, sealed by the
 hand of Death.

THE END

GAUNT clouds are piled athwart the sky,
The cold wind sighs along the earth,
In hapless towns the people die,
The fires are cold on every hearth,
The spectral moon has lost its light,
The shrunken sun is pale and wan,
And time is one unholy night —
A night that never knows a dawn.

Forsaken homes where mortals dwelt
Are drear as death and still as Styx,
The cloisters where the godly knelt
Are fallen on the crucifix;
No watcher ponders on the stars,
Of life and death no sages tell,
No soldier hastens to the wars,
No preacher speaks of heaven or hell.

The fiery meteors cross the skies,
And far apart the Twins have gone,
A planet to the sacrifice!
And Paris sleeps with Babylon.
A mighty race has passed away,
A fretful planet whirled in space —
A pawn in time's unending play,
Is mourning for the mighty race.

"NO MORE"

(Written on the evictions in Gweedore on the northern coast of Ireland.)

THE sun moves on its path of light
Across the heaven's floor,
The welkin beams above the night —
But they return no more.

The mountains sentinel the glen
And all its emerald store,
The meadow, copsewood, and the fen —
But they return no more.

The honeysuckle in the vale
Was ne'er so fair before,
The roses scent the evening gale —
But they return no more.

The watchdog, waiting hollow-eyed
Before the cabin door,
No more will be the peasant's pride,
For they return no more.

For ever stilled the evening latch,
The peat fire's glow is o'er,
The ivy fattens on the thatch,
For they return no more.

The ocean twines its throbbing arms
Around the silent shore,
Or raises loud its wild alarums —
But they return no more.

Upon the beach the lugger lies
Beside the useless oar,
No more 't will bear the fisher's prize,
Now they return no more.

Where once the weaver plied his trade
The shuttle's flight is o'er,
The ditch now holds the rotted spade,
And they return no more.

Not now is heard the evening chime,
The reapers' song is o'er,
They wander weary in a clime
From which they come no more.

Sad, sad, thy tale, land of my birth,
Bear witness wild Gweedore,
Thy children banished o'er the earth,
And they return no more.

SALVE, REX DEI GRACIA!

This may have happened in new-world times,
Or yet in the ages of long ago,
I am a writer writing my rhymes,
And how on earth should a rhymers know!

THERE lived a man who was wise and old,
And the old are wise, we must all agree,
And the things he had learned were manifold,
For he ate the fruit of the knowledge tree.
But lo, and behold you! there came to him,
As he walked abroad in the city square,
Scholar and merchant and soldier grim,
Who making obeisance spoke him fair:—

“We come, from the people of many a land,
Unworthy to press your garment hem—
To crown thee here, as is their command,
For the sake of the good you have done for them.
We come from the peoples of town on town,
The people, who know your power and worth,
And they bade us bring you a golden crown
And crown you—the greatest man on earth.”

“We slept, and you toiled thro’ the lee-long night,
You saw us unmeet, and made us fit.”
But the brow of the seer grew black as night;
And he questioned—“What merit has come of it?
I have planned the ships that ye sail afar,
And taught you to sharpen the arrow-head;
But your ships are battered in shiftless war,
And your brothers’ blood on the arrow is red.

" I have taught you to build your houses fine ;
But the beggars grovel before the door,
And you house your servants amongst the swine,
And boast your pride to the starving poor.
Now do you come with cant and crown
To crown me greatest of all mankind !
But, follow me far from the crowded town,
I'll shew you the man you come to find ! "

They followed him, far from the city square,
Soldier and scholar in cloak and hood.
They came to a village, the pump and there
Gaping the village idiot stood.
Untutored, unmeet to labour or plan,
A brainless, brutish and simple thing —
But the seer outspoke — " Behold the man
You claim as Monarch ! Go, crown him King ! "

" King ! " said the scholar, and laughed his mirth.

" King ! " said the soldier, and loudly swore.

" Though long we have bowed to your power and
worth,

Henceforth we scoff at your simple lore.

The good he has done, we would wish to hear

In town or in country, in forge or farm."

" Oh, little, perchance," replied the seer,

" But he never has done a mortal harm."

So the village idiot was crowned as King.

'T is strange, and in sooth it may be so.

I am a singer trying to sing,

And how on earth should a singer know ?

DOWN ON THE DEAD END

(On tramp, 1909.)

I'VE toiled at the end of creation, stripped to the
trousers and shirt,
I've hashed like the very damnation and squandered
my money like dirt,
And jobs that are nameless I've wrought in, and deeds
that are shameless I've done,
And fights without number I've fought in, and paid
like the deuce for my fun.

I've piled up the slush in the bucket, down to my
knees in the drift,
Wet till I felt I must chuck it, or drop like a mule at
my shift,
In dreary and desolate places, with the boss standing
glowering by
At his men and their fungous-white faces, I've felt as
if ready to die.

Drink, and I've tried to keep from it, women and
cards — 't was the same,
The dog will return to his vomit, the devil is boss of
the game,
The red of the wine cup has hidden the adders with
poisonous teeth,
The sunlight is bright on the midden, with the rot of
the wide world beneath.

Disheartened, discarded, disgusted, I'm down on the
dead-line once more,
Beggared, benighted and bursted, the jail or the work-
house before —
Well, life had its trouble and worry, the Fates have
been devilish hard,
My chances went by in a hurry, I plunged on the rot-
tenest card.

I have n't a pipe-full of Carroll's to cheer me while
tramping it out,
And getting because of my morals a hell of a knocking
about,
— Well! life was a foolhardy gamble and down in its
by-ways I strove,
And perhaps in the ultimate scramble I'll corner a
shakedown above.

RUN DOWN

IN the grim dead end he lies, with passionless filmy
eyes,
English Ned, with a hole in his head,
Staring up at the skies.

The engine driver swore as often he swore before —
“I whistled him back from the flamin’ track,
An’ I could n’t do no more.”

The gaffer spoke through the ’phone “Platelayer
Seventy-one
Got killed to-day on the six-foot way,
By a goods on the city run.

“English Ned was his name,
No one knows whence he came,
He did n’t take mind of the road behind
And none of us is to blame.”

They turned the slag in the bed
To cover the clotted red,
Washed the joints and the crimsoned points,
And buried poor English Ned.

*In the drear dead end he lies,
With the earth across his eyes,
And a stone to say,
How he passed away
To a shift beyond the skies.*

WITH THE BREAKDOWN SQUAD

*"Wreck of the city express, sir,"
The newspaper sellers yell,
The people are buying, buying,
My! don't the papers sell,
And the publishers say in their usual way
"Business is doing well."*

"**A** TANNER down on a three spot,
Losing again, he blowed!"
"Give me a fill of tobacco."
"Here, a one that I owed."
"Losing again with — Heavens!
A passenger off the road!"

Seventy-nine was the engine,
Speediest on the line —
We rushed to the van like demons
And waited the signal sign,
Then flashing afar like a scymitar
Went the flame of seventy-nine.

Out in the night as phantoms,
Out to the wreck we steal,
Horror urging our heart-beats,
Feeling as sinners feel —
The rails like souls in torment
Whimpered beneath the wheel.

Above us the moon went sailing
White as the face of death,
Watching the engine gliding
Over the world beneath,
While we pulled at our pipes in silence,
And heard our every breath.

The engine fire is cleaving
A path to the stars on high —
The cirrus clouds in the heaven
Like burial shrouds go by,
Sent from the dim hereafter
For men and women who die.

In the gaunt and gelid cutting
Ghouls of the darkness brood,
A lone, belated raven
Cries through the solitude,
And the signals rise to danger
Redder than human blood.

A crash of brakes in the darkness —
A rush and a crash again:
Men are wailing in anguish,
Women laugh in their pain —
As a prayer that's prayed by a grave new made
Is the groan of the coupling chain.

The rails are splashed with crimson,
There's blood on the catcher bar,
The writhing engine hisses
Through the sky-roofed abattoir —
As the flame in a midnight churchyard
Is the light of each chilly star.

“ Out with the lint and bandage —
See are the stretchers spread —
Out with a man to the signal
And guard the line ahead.
Haste, and look to the living
Before you bother the dead.

There 's sorrow deeper than tears
That words in vain may speak —
The tearless mother watches
The red on her baby's cheek,
And downcast unwet lashes
Tell of the hearts that break.

Out in the night and the horror
We labour and curse or pray,
“ Give me a drink of water — ”
“ I 'll meet her some other day — ”
We place the maimed on the stretchers,
The dead in the six-foot way.

“ Two inches wide in the gauging,
Out with the ramps and — yes,
The facing points must have done it —
Lord, what an awful mess!
But hurry and have it ready
For passing the night express.”

“ *Awful railway disaster,*”
The newspapers chronicle —
The men in the streets are buying —
Gracious! the papers sell,
And the publishers say in their usual way
“ Business is doing well.”

ON THE LATE SHIFT

*Mayhap there's a hitch in the signal wire,
Or the other points are drawn,
But some go out on the night-shift lone
That never come in with the dawn,
And a crimson splash on the engine wheel
Just tells of the shunter gone.*

SEVEN waggons to siding four, one to the buffer end —

Damn you, watch! or they'll run you down. God,
it's a hellish night!

Jimmy Collins is getting a wife — time he was making
a bend —

There he's there at the dead-end points, signalling
with the light.

“A good man out on the night-shift, Jim, willing —
and ain't it queer,

There he's singing, the first time I've heard him
in my life —

Yes, willing and straight is Jimmy, I've mated him
seven year —

Damn it, it's blowing somewhat — and now he
looks for a wife.

“See and look to your carcass, and watch! On a night
like this

You never can tell the minute — where has that
Collins gone? —

An engine punches your ticket — God, if your feet
should miss —

Damn me! I think I'm nervous — signal the en-
gine on.

.

"Two o'clock! I was certain 't was almost break of
day —

Where is Collins? Oh, yonder. I'm wet to the
very spine —

A train for the cross-road siding — pull it the other
way —

Collins, you fool! what ails you? Jump to the
other line!

"Collins, you idiot, jump it! . . . Christ, he's down
like a sack! . . .

Surely he must have heard me. . . . Speak to me,
Jimmy, do.

. . . Tell me you are n't hurt — ah! the blood on
track —

. . . I shifted the engine, Jimmy, but heavens! I
thought you knew."

.

"Break it to her in the morning — I was thinking
about her, then —

The wind was blowing awful — sudden the engine
came. . . .

. . . Whistle the box for the signal. . . . Married to
her at ten.

. . . Father, who art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy
name."

*Mayhap there's a hitch in the signal wire,
Or the other points are drawn,*

*But a red stain gleams on the deadly flange,
And a night-shift man is gone —
And the bride to be has changed her robe
For a mourning dress at dawn.*

A LAST WISH

(From the German of Sturm.)

WHEN my heart has ceased for ever beating out
the dirge of time,
Lay me by some quiet river, 'neath the ivy spray and
thyme,
Place no fading, fragrant roses, o'er the dew-be-
sprinkled moss,
For the weary sleeper chooses but the evergreen and
cross.

DREAMINGS

THE bog blossom's golden pistil,
The shimmering torrent's crystal
Fling of its sapphire waters, crested with foam-drift
white,
The moorland and scent of the musky
Wild flower borne on the dusky
Wings of the wandering breezes that carry the starry
night,

Come with dreams of the wondrous olden
Times, when fancy's golden
Wand lay o'er my boyhood, filling my mind with
joy —
I can see the moor and the dimly
Waving gorse, and grimly
The strong man smiles at the yearning that made the
life of the boy.

Ghosts of the olden faces,
Voices from silent places,
Eyes that are filled with laughter, eyes that with tears
are wet,
Into the days so gloomy
Come in my musings to me —
One who has ne'er forgotten, one who can ne'er forget.

MATER DOLOROSA

HE raised the latch iv his father's door,
An' went, the dark look on his face —
I wait an' wait him ivermore,
On him I wait for ivermore,
As not a wan can fill his place.

The kine go east at dawn iv day,
In the cold grey dawn I tell my beads,
But out in the wurl' an' miles away,
An' miles an' miles so far away
My Fergus lives an' niver heeds.

The kine come back to me at eve,
But still he never comes anigh;
Through all the night I pray an' grieve,
Through all the long, black night I grieve,
An' pray to God, an' cry an' cry.

An' "Mary pity me," I pray,
I pray to God, "Thy will be done,"
But more to her my prayers I say,
To Mary, Mother, more I say,
For long ago she lost her Son.

I look in the fire an' think an' sing,
An' sing the songs he liked to hear,
An' often to my mind I bring
His form an' face, so well I bring,
I think that he is very near.

I weep thro' all the lonely night,
An' pray an' pray upon my knees,
That maybe with the morrow's light
He 'll come back, with the morrow's light —
For Mary, Mother, hears an' sees.

UNFULFILLED

THERE is dew upon the meadows brightly glancing in the morn,
And a blush of softest crimson comes across the waving corn,
And the waters brightly gleaming journey onward to the sea,
But nought fulfils the promise that the Springtime made to me.

'T is the olden, olden story, with its hope and with its pain,
Loved awhile with deep devotion, never to be loved again —
Oft again will gentle Springtime paint the flower and tint the tree,
But the soft-voiced Spring will never bring its second hopes to me.

Oft will mem'ry's fairy musings light upon the past again,
Ere the spell of love was broken by the alchemy of pain —
We were young, and we were happy, trusting in the future — we —
But the present's full of sorrow, and the sorrow falls on me.

There is dew upon the meadows brightly glancing in
the morn,
And a crimson blush of promise rises on the waving
corn,
And the earth with hope is pregnant; howsoever it
may be,
It can ne'er fulfil the promise that the Springtime
made to me.

THE VALLEY

A FAIRY-LIKE valley, with grim mountains
hiding it,
Peacefully sleeping 'mong meadow-lands fair,
A river of carmine and silver dividing it,
And scent of the wild-flowers filling the air.
Never a grey mist comes earthwards enshrouding it,
There never weepeth the cypress or yew,
Only the night-shadows lovingly clouding it,
Or trellised cirrus with stars peeping through.

Up by the braes, there the heather bells cluster,
Where the wind-flower blooms and the gorse-blossoms be
Guarding the lane, see the bright daisies muster
The starry battalions by hedgerow and tree.
Over the sedges a streamlet is flinging its
Frivolous waters in vermeil-tinged spray,
Over the fallow a wild bird is singing its
Song of delight to the ears of the day.

A woodland is there and the blackberries grow in it,
And grey gnarled oaks that the ages have bent,
Blossoms as white and as pure as the snow in it,
Fair as the stars in the deep firmament.
A shadowy pool where the green water-cresses are
Languidly floating in sensuous rest,
Is hidden 'mid ferns that with tremulous tresses are
Playing with glee in the breath of the west.

A valley of dreams, with the dim mountains hiding it,
Streamlets of silver through meadow-lands fair,
A river of carmine and sapphire dividing it,
And scent of the wild flowers filling the air.

A TALE OF THE BOGLAND

'T IS meself that hates the city, an' the hurry, an'
the din —

An' I wish that I was out of it, its worry an' its sin,
For me mind is on the bogland, when the day is drear
an' dim;

I could be happy all me life, if I was back with him.
But the wurl is up agin' me, an' so bitter is me heart,
For he is on the bogland yet, an' I am far apart.

'T is meself that loved the bogland stretchin' out agin'
the sky,

With the summer flowers a-blowin' an' the peat-stacks
gettin' dry;

There was dew upon the heather at the dawnin' o' the
day,

An' the rushes in the marshes ever sung their sleepy
lay,

An' he told me in the gloamin' that I won his manly
heart,

But he is on the bogland yet, an' I am far apart.

'T is meself that loved to linger when the big red sun
went down,

An' the purple heavens rested on the bogland lone
an' brown;

I told him when I met him that I loved the evenin'
air,

Tho' glorious the evenin' well I knew he would be
there,

An' he loved me with devotion, an' he pressed me to
his heart,

But he is on the bogland yet, an' I am far apart.

'Tis meself regrets the hour that I met the stranger
there,

But he had got a manner fine an' such a pleasant air;
He told me of the wonder sights an' glories of the
town

Until me eyes grew weary of the bogland's waste of
brown,

But though the strangers' halls are fine, mine is a
broken heart,

For he is on the bogland yet, an' I am far apart.

LONGINGS

(Burns model lodging-house, 1910.)

THERE is clatter on the pavement, there is hurry
in the street,
The curtains of the night are dropping down,
The heart-throbs of the city clang with dull insistent
beat,
The gas lights glimmer faintly thro' the town —
The ten-hour shift is laboured, and the gaffer's voice
is still,
And my thoughts go o'er the ocean surge afar,
To the meadow and the river and the breen and the
hill,
And the little lime-washed cottage in Kilcar.

I have seen the crimson dawning of a Spanish morn-
ing glow,
I have cowered before the menace of the wild,
I have seen the sapphire sunlight tint the everlasting
snow
Where December's virgin granaries are piled,
I have heard the mountain torrents hurtle riotous in
wrath,
I have tramped the roads to London and to Rome,
But I'd rather have my childhood and the narrow
moorland path,
The path that leads to happiness and home.
I am sitting by the hot-plate and my comrades talk
about
The things they've done and which they should n't
do,

I have been their pal in sinning, and I've got to grin
it out,

And the harvest of my oats is overdue —

'Tis not so much the slaving in the sewerage of life,

'Tis not so much the toiling and the wet,

'Tis not so much the curbing of my hatred of the
strife,

But the shattered dreams I never can forget.

The shrines the world has broken were the shrines
at which I knelt,

And the faith I cherished so it laughed to shame,

But God alone in Heaven knows the sufferings I felt,

When I sold my youth's ideals for a name,

And pawned my simple virtues for a meed of evil
praise,

Ah, I pledged them where I never could redeem,

Tho' to many it was merely just a love of newer ways,

To me it was the waking from a dream.

They are rough and rugged fellows, my companions
sworn and true,

And maybe I am rough and rude as they —

But oh, heavens! how they'd mock me, if by chance
they ever knew

That I hankered for a cabin miles away —

Where it stands above the shingle that the waters
whirl upon,

As they race across the sandhill and the bar —

That I long for it by night, dreaming by the hot-plate
bright,

My father's homely cottage in Kilcar.

GOING HOME

(Doherty's shack, 1909.)

I 'M going back to Glenties when the harvest fields
are brown,
And the Autumn sunset lingers on my little Irish
town,
When the gossamer is shining where the moorland
blossoms blow
I 'll take the road across the hills I tramped so long
ago —
'T is far I am beyond the seas, but yearning voices call,
"Will you not come back to Glenties, and your wave-
washed Donegal?"

I 've seen the hopes of childhood stifled by the hand of
time,
I 've seen the smile of innocence become the frown of
crime,
I 've seen the wrong rise high and strong, I 've seen
the fair betrayed,
Until the faltering heart fell low, the brave became
afraid —
But still the cry comes out to me, the homely voices
call,
From the Glen among the highlands of my ancient
Donegal.

Sure, I think I see them often, when the night is on
the town,
The Braes of old Strasala, and the homes of Carrig-
doun —

There 's a light in Jimmy Lynch's house, a shadow on
the blind,
I often watched the shadow, for 't was Mary in be-
hind,
And often in the darkness, 't is myself that sees it all,
For I cannot help but dreaming of the folk in Donegal.

So I 'll hie me back to Glenties when the harvest comes
again,
And the kine are in the pasture and the berries in the
lane,
Then they 'll give me such a handshake that my heart
will leap with joy,
When a father and a mother welcome back their way-
ward boy.
So I 'm going back to Glenties when the autumn
showers fall,
And the harvest home is cheery in my dear old
Donegal.

THE RETURN

THE boy came home from a foreign land,
Weary and wan, with his staff in hand;
Five years' absence had left their trace
On golden hair, and on sunny face.
His gait was weary, his limbs were sore;
His youthful friends knew him no more.
The grey-haired padre passed him by
Unrecognised. With a heedless eye
The toll gatekeeper saw him pass and go
Up the dusty road, but in years ago,
The boy was the dearest friend he had,
But the tollman's eyes with the years grew bad.
As fair as of old 'neath her summer hat,
At the cottage door his sweetheart sat,
But the white dust rose from the road on high,
And she knew him not as he passed her by.
He entered his home with footsteps slow —
His friends forgot him, would his parents know?
"God bless you, stranger," the father cries,
But the sun shone strong in the old man's eyes.
But the mother wept on his neck with joy —
"My son, my son, my wandering boy."

HOME

I'M back again in Glenties and the Autumn wind
is blowing,
The silver-sandalled evening skips across the mountains high,
But the bogland flowers are fading where of old I
watched them growing,
And the lean leaves of Lammas tide are whirling thro'
the sky.

The bogland flowers are fading, and I mark them as
a token
Of the early hopes I cherished to my sorrow and regret;
The silver cord is loosened, and the golden bowl is
broken,
And another heart is wearisome and longing to forget.

The slender threads of gossamer are shining on the
heather,
The little brooks are tumbling as they hurry to and
fro,
I tramp along the breen that we tramped of old
together,
My love and I together in the days of long ago.

The road across the moorland sure it's twisting an'
it's turning
Round the braes of old Strasala and the heights of
Carrigdoun,

But in the mellow Autumn dusk one lamp has ceased
from burning,
And a hearth is cold and cheerless on the way to
Glenties town.

I'll leave my home again and I'll bid good-bye to-
morrow,
And I'll pass the little churchyard and the tomb
a-near the wall,
I have lived so much for love I can hardly live for
sorrow
By the grave that holds my colleen in a glen of
Donegal.

THE DEPARTED

DOWN from the open spaces where the banshee
 wails to the moon,
From the lonely moorland places where the witches
 hold domain,
Like a ghost of the past the midnight blast wails at my
 window pane,
Out of the night and the silence it comes to my window
 pane,
 Full of a longing vain
It has wafted thro' her burial shroud, and the matted
 coils of her hair,
Where the ghouls of the gloom foregather over the
 tomb wherein
She moulders away to the senseless clay — she who
 was free from sin.
Heaven! the grave and its horrors, ugly and dark as
 sin,
 And the beautiful maid therein!

Sunlight and moonlight and starlight, interblent with
 the dew,
The modesty of the passion flower, the youthful, hopeful
 glow —
She was greater to me than the world to be, than any-
 thing mortals know,
Greater by far than life or death, or aught that the
 mortals know
 In this evil-starred world below.

And the weeping wind in the darkness lingers around
her tomb,

Presses her clay cold tresses and lips where my lips
have lain,

And I hear it say in its wistful way — When do we
meet again?

When do you meet your olden love and keep your
tryst again?

Says the wind at the window pane.

HEROES

*What is a man? Not ours to ask,
Not ours to make reply.
But from Southampton to the Clyde
Can Britain testify —
That they are men and more than men
Who know the way to die.*

THE little blue fox has seen it break apart from
the riven floe,
The little blue fox of the Arctic waste that seeks its
food in the snow;
On gale-gored beach and wave-washed cliff the bear
has seen it reel,
The polar bear as it left its lair to hunt for the frozen
seal.
The lone moose bull on some outcast cape has won-
dered to see it pass,
As it shuffled the snow off its feeding grounds and
sought for the meagre grass.

The sealer scurried from out its track, and the fright-
ened whaler fled,
For the derelict berg on the fishing seas is a thing of
fear and dread.
'T was battered and worn by icy waves and swept by
their madd'ning wrath,
And the Northern Lights came out at night to glare
on its lonely path.

But ever and on 'neath the dusk and dawn to the
southern seas it bore,
With the lean locked lands of the north astern and
the trackless seas before.

.

Proudly she swung from the crowded pier, as the
mooring chains ran free,
Virgin pure from the Belfast docks, to the olden trail
of the sea.

As the music swelled from the fading beach, the
pounding screws replied,

And the grey, lank waves went gliding by, an arm's
reach overside.

Alas! for the joy of the lover and maid, alas! for the
children gay —

The little blue fox on the Arctic waste is safer by
far than they.

.

West! and the English fields grew dim, and the coast-
wise lights shone clear.

Say, did they laugh on the crowded decks, and the
doom so very near?

West! and the coastwise lights gave out, and the stars
of heaven shone,

And the sailor watched through the midnight hour,
aloof, apart, alone.

South! 'neath the sinister polar star the death-bearing
berg went forth.

Oh! they who sail on herded seas should dread the
Doom of the North.

May Heaven pity the sailor man, when the Northern
Doom's abroad,

For the ship is built by the human hand, the berg by
the hand of God.

The stars looked down from the lonely sky — as they
looked on the polar snow

Where the bear had eaten the little blue fox it killed
by the Arctic floe.

.
Say, was the joke in the stateroom heard, the laugh
on the maiden's lips?

Lord of the waves! have pity on men who go down to
the sea in ships.

Say, did the grimy stoker smile in the heat of the fur-
nace breath?

We do not know, but this we know, he laughed in
the face of Death.

Say, did the lover hurry and fret to come to his sweet-
heart's side?

We only know, when the davits swung, he gallantly
stood aside.

And some there were, whose life and work was much
misunderstood,

But in the hour that tried their souls, we know their
death was good.

And greater by far than deeds of war or right or a
grand mistake

Is a life that is given in sacrifice for a child or a
woman's sake.

What is a man? Not ours to ask,

Nor yet to make reply.

But from Southampton to the Clyde

Can Britain testify

That they are men and more than men

Who know the way to die.

THE OLD LURE

(Fleet Street, 1912.)

WHEN the gaunt night covers the city,
And the fog drifts down the wind,
I sit in my study thinking
Of the pals I left behind;
And the old lure of the old life
Enters into my mind.

I'm sick of the books before me,
And the sorry lore that they hold;
And I long for the full-blooded lusty youth,
That passed like a tale that's told.
Oh! the old life is the sweetest life;
And my heart goes back to the old

Dibble and drift and drill,
Ratchet and rail and rod,
Shovel and spanner and screw,
Hard-hafted hammer and hod,
The rattle of wheels on the facing points,
And the smell of the rain-washed sod.

The call of a wondrous past
Is throbbing in my heart-strings,
The danger-lights aflare
Where the hooded signal swings,
The clash of the closing blades,
As the straining point-rod springs.

The old friend is the best friend,
He who has stood the test:
The old song is the sweetest song,
Sweeter than all the rest.
And the old life that I left behind
Is far and away the best.

When I go back to the old pals,
'T is a glad, glad boy I'll be;
With them will I share the doss-house bunk,
And join their revels with glee;
And the lean men of the lone shacks
Shall share their tucker with me.

My hobnailed bluchers I shall put on,
Firm in welt and vamp,
And get me moleskin and corduroy,
Proof to the dirt and damp,
And sweat on the shift with the navvy-men
And doss again with the tramp.

Where the sunsets flame on the offside track
Amber and cochineal,
Where the dawn breaks, a waking rose,
I'll beg and starve and steal,
Or hash with the stiff-lipped navvy-men,
And feel as I used to feel.

'T is oh! for the hot-plate reeking red,
When the naphtha lamps are lit,
As the jokes go round the gambling school
Told with a ready wit,
The well-won rest of a slavish day,
The joy and glamour of it!

Sick indeed of the city am I,
Its make-believe and its show,
The roar and rush of the crowded streets -
Where men run to and fro.
For I've hashed in the drift for seven year,
And back to the drift I'll go,
Back to the men of the lone lank lands
And the pals of long ago.

THE LAST RHYME, SAVE ONE

I have gathered a poise of other men's flowers, and nothing but the thread that binds them is mine own. — MONTAIGNE.

I 'VE sung in a wayward fashion
The song of a rugged heart,
With less of power than of passion,
With more of desire than art,
Tales of roving and roaming,
Stories of daring done,
While ye wait for the poet coming —
The singer of later on.

From drear and deserted places,
Where the wastes of creation lie,
Where the pitiless hail-cloud races
Over the merciless sky,
On the offside of desolation
When the fog is fetid and dense,
In the watchman's reeking station
Guarding the sliprail fence,
Tales of the great unholy,
Lazily, lovingly, long,
I've gathered in byways lowly
And fashioned them into song.

The rime of the roving fellow
Who dreams by the midnight fire,
When the autumn leaves are yellow
And sere as his youth's desire.

The dirge of the loosened boulder
And the thing that gasps beneath,
While the hod is yet on the shoulder,
The pipe is yet in the teeth,
Of the dynamite in the boring,
That did n't go off when it should,
And the pick that went exploring,
And the pal who left for good —
For ever the signal reddens,
For ever is danger near,
And the sound of the up-train deadens
The down-train's roar in the ear.

.

Thus have I sung their story,
That wondrous story of theirs,
The navvies' sorrow and glory,
And death that is unawares,
But under the rougher singing,
In a quivering undertone,
Perchance you will hear it ringing,
A song that is all mine own,
Out of its rough environs,
The roar of the running cars,
The lilt of the canting irons,
The rune of the lifting bars,
Apart from the navvy quarrels,
Card-school riot and song,
Manners, merits and morals,
And chivalry — going wrong —
Perchance that you will discover
Under the rugged art
The voice of the nature lover,
The song of the singer's heart.

A poet will follow after,
A poet of later years,
To sing of their joy and laughter,
And weep for their woe and tears,
Striking the tuneful lyre
Greater than me by far,
As the rose outrivals the briar,
As the sun outrivals the star,
And the songs I sing in the gloaming
May turn to nought in the dawn
That beams for the singer coming,
The poet of later on.

L'ENVOI—TO MY PICK AND SHOVEL

*When the last, long shift will be laboured, and the
lying time will be burst,*

*And we go as picks or shovels, navvies or nabobs,
must,*

*When you go up on the scrap-heap and I go down
to the dust,*

*Will ever a one remember the times our voices rung,
When you were limber and lissome, and I was lusty
and young?*

*Remember the jobs we've laboured, the heartfelt songs
we've sung?*

*Perhaps some mortal in speaking will give us a kindly
thought —*

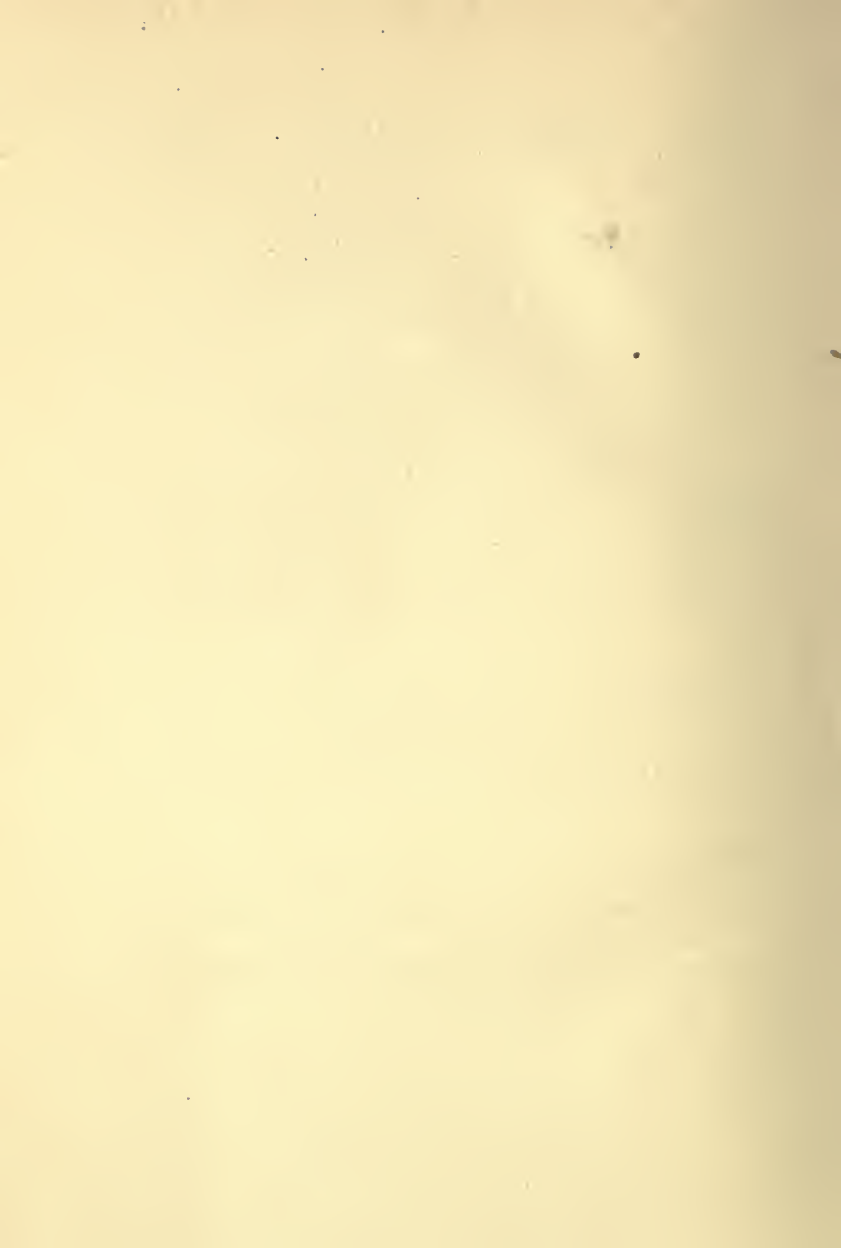
*"There is a muck-pile they shifted, here is a place
where they wrought."*

*But maybe our straining and striving and singing will
go for nought,*

*When you go up on the scrap-heap, and I go down
to the dust —*

*(Little children of labour, food for the worms and
the rust,)*

*When the last long shift will be laboured and the
lying time will be burst.*



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